

HARRY POTTER THE BIRTH OF THE PHOENIX

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Chapter One: Thoughts and Actions

Harry wandered around the grounds of Hogwarts turning everything that happened that year over in his head, going over every last detail. The Death Eaters escape from Azkaban, the witch that was put in as headmistress in place of Dumbledore, who I might add was completely insane, and of course Sirius's death. As he walked he could vaguely hear the other students calling his name and saying well done, which infuriated him to no end. These were the same people that had spread the stories about him being insane in the first place, spread rumors that he was disturbed and seeking attention, and even that he was the one that murdered Cedric. But now here they were acting like they were best friends with 'the boy who lived' now that the world knew that he was telling the truth about Voldemort's return. In other words they were friends of convenience.

This train of thought got him thinking of his earlier years at Hogwarts. In his second year everyone turned on him when they believed he was the heir of Slytherin simply because he could speak to snakes. They spread rumors and accused him of attacking the other students, but did a complete 180 when he rescued Ginny Weasley from the Chamber of Secrets and killed the beast within. Much of the same situation accrued in his fourth year when the Goblet of Fire spit his name out for the Tri Wizard Tournament. They did not believe that he did not enter his name, not even his best friend Ron Weasley believed him. But they all came around after his excellent performance in the first task.

Harry was vaguely aware of his friends trying to get him to go to the Great Hall for the end of the year feast but he just ignored them. He was too wrapped up in his own thoughts to care about eating. He had faced down Voldemort five times now since he was born, a man that had murdered his parents and countless others, he had witnessed his godfather fall to the hands of one of his followers not that long ago. But what hurt most was the complete and utter betrayal of those closest to him. He blamed them all for what happened and he could not forgive them. Most notably was Minister Fudge for not taking action when it counted, then Professor Snape for pretty much driving Sirius out into the open. And then of course there was professor Dumbledore.....

Inside the Great Hall Professor Dumbledore just finished giving his farewell speech and began eating when the doors to the hall burst open. No one could dispute the cold look in Harry's eyes as he strode towards the high table dragging his trunk behind him. Albus Dumbledore suddenly got a fearful look in his eyes as he realized what Harry was going to do. Harry reached the high table and turned gazing at the students with contempt.

"What do you think you are doing Potter, go take a seat right this instant," Professor Snape bellowed looking his most fearsome.

“Be quite Snape!” Harry snapped back, not even trying to hide his animosity. Snape immediately flew out of his chair and was about to tell the young wizard off when Harry raised his voice and spoke in a tone that would give the devil himself a moments pause. “Sit down and keep your mouth shut, this won’t take long.” Snape just shot him the most menacing glare he could come up with which Harry matched. After a few moments much to the students and teachers amazement Snape lowered his gaze and did as he was told. Harry then turned his attention back to the assembled student body.

“Now before we all go home for the summer and you empty your heads, I have a few things to say”. The entire hall was now completely fixed on him wondering what it was that he was going to say. “First off I want to thank those of my friends that stuck by me no matter what over the years, which I am sad to say isn’t very many. The rest who claim to be my friends have turned on me for many reasons, all of which were proven false. Who seem to feel more comfortable labeling me as a dark wizard that was praying on the half bloods and muggle borns of the school. You saw fit to call me a liar and a cheat to get into the tournament last year. And then of course my favorite, mentally unstable, an attention seeking child. There have even been those that have called me a murderer, believing that I had murdered Cedric. Here’s a little clip I read from the Daily Prophet. “A lone voice of truth, perceived as unbalanced, yet never wavered in his story, forced to bear ridicule and slander.” “That was a rather interesting read but it wasn’t complete in the fact that it did not say that it was those very same writers and editors that were ridiculing and slandering me.” It seemed that the students were really nervous by now as though Harry would turn on them at any moment.

“This school has been my home for five years, I thought I was accepted here, but I was wrong. Those that don’t hate me for some reason or another only see me as ‘the boy who lived’ as a savior, a symbol of hope when you people are not busy sticking knives in my back. Well you people can find yourselves a new bloody symbol because I’ve had enough. Now my aunt and uncle may hate me and kick me around but at least there and at that muggle school I know were I stand. Unlike here, being surrounded by a bunch of two faced mother fuckers.” With that Harry kicked open his trunk and with one last look at all his belongings raised his wand and set the trunk ablaze. The entire great hall sat there shocked, teachers included, even Dumbledore who at that time was thinking that that was not what he expected at all. With that done Harry simply snapped his wand in half and strode out of the great hall without a backwards glance.

Chapter Two: Decisions

As Harry left the Great Hall there were many different reactions to his words. Hermione and Ginny were crying, Ron, Neville and most of the others were simply stunned beyond words. Luna Lovegood wore that same annoying serene look that was so familiar to everyone that knew her. The teachers, Dumbledore included, looked almost terrified.

After a few minutes of absolute silence the hall erupted in shocked chatter. Instead of trying to calm everyone down Dumbledore simply stood up from his chair and left the hall for his office, looking older than he had ever felt before. As he reached the stone gargoyle he stopped, realizing that he had actually forgotten his own password. He simply stood there as if expecting it to simply jump aside on its own. After a number of minutes, he could not tell how long, Professor McGonagall came and gave the password looking at him with a worried expression. With her were the other heads of houses including Professor Snape who was looking a good deal paler than usual.

When they reached the office Albus sat behind his desk and motioned for the others to sit as well. There they sat for what felt like an eternity until the silence was broken by Snape of all people.

“Headmaster we can’t let Potter go like this. If anything were to happen he would be completely defenseless, he doesn’t even have a wand anymore. If something else happens like with the dementors last summer we will lose him for good.”

“Sadly Severus, I believe that is what he has in mind.” As he said this Albus felt a lump rising up in his throat and he found it hard to give any reply at all. “But you are right, we must not leave him unprotected. He may have finally snapped after years of this world turning against him and there for rejected us but I for one will not give up on him. But I will give him a few days to calm down before I approach him.”

“What did he mean when he said his family hated him? I was under the impression that.....”

“That he was a spoiled child. Raised as a prince.” Dumbledore finished sadly. At Severus’ nod he elaborated. “Harry has been mistreated all his life. He grew up in a household that despised him, made him believe that he was inferior. Unfortunately I did not know the extent of it until Hagrid went to deliver his Hogwarts letter before his first year. I assumed that Mrs. Dursley would raise him well out of respect for her sister but I assumed wrong. As a matter a fact Severus his childhood was a good deal like your own.”

As he sat there listening to Dumbledore’s account of Harry’s life thus far Snape felt a little guilty for his treatment of Harry. He had always thought of him as James Potter’s son, never as his own person. He thought he could exact some measure of revenge on his father by treating him like dirt. But now he realized that he was just helping in driving Harry out of their world, when he was already unwelcome in the muggle world. Not that he would actually admit to this out loud.

“In the morning I will send an owl to Arabella and explain what has been going on and ask her to keep an extra eye on him until I get there.” Albus began to pace the office seeming to be in deep thought. After a few moments he sat back down and spoke.

“Now due to the Ministries recent rare acts of wisdom there will be two dozen Aurors on board the train back to London tomorrow, but I would also like some of our own people as well. Remus and Arthur have already agreed. I have also asked Alestor and Mundagus. With any luck the journey will be uneventful.”

As they were speaking in the Headmaster's office another group was out looking for their friend. Hermione and Ginny had calmed down a bit but Ron and Neville still looked utterly shocked and of course Luna looked as if nothing could ever bother her. “Ron where do you think he went. I mean, we have looked almost everywhere.”

“I don't know Hermione. I can't think of any where else he would..... THE QUIDDITCH PITCH.” Ron exclaimed in a loud voice. The others mentally slapped themselves for not thinking of it sooner, then ran to the entrance hall to head down to the pitch. But when they got there they found nothing but the empty stands. This was because Harry was in the one spot no one, and I mean no one, would go looking for him..... the divination classroom in the north tower.

As Harry walked through the school after having left the great hall his mind was spinning. Had he actually just done that? For a few moments he began to panic but then began to think of the reasons he had done it and installed in him a new resolve. He wasn't going to be there puppet any more, he was cutting the strings and cutting everyone loose. He was sick and tired of everyone's bullshit. Telling him that he was too young to get involved, that he would be told soon enough. If anyone had the right to know what was going on it was him. He was the one being attacked all the time not them. Now look where their secrecy got them. Sirius was dead and he was leaving.

As he was walking he heard voices up ahead and immediately knew who they were. Not wanting to be found he found the perfect place. No one would think to look for him here and the old bat was not here at the moment so it was perfect. He simply walked up to one of the desks sat down and went to sleep.

The next morning dawned clear and sunny without a hint of cloud in the sky. Naturally Harry hated it. He got up early and used one of the secret passages to get to Hogsmeade early to catch the train back to London before anyone else got there. He got on board, found a compartment and waited for the students leaving for the summer to arrive. After an hour and a half of waiting they finally arrived! Unfortunately it was Draco Malfoy that walked into his compartment.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here? Little Potty all alone, that's the saddest thing I've ever heard of. I must say Potter it is about time you realized that you don't have any friends.” He said with his usual sneer.

“Keep your mouth shut Malfoy before you regret it.”

“Oh what are you going to do to me Potter? There are three of us with wands and

if memory serves you broke yours last night. And you don't have the weasels and the mudbloo.....”

Malfoy didn't get any further as Harry was out of his seat and before he or his goons could react he landed a powerful right hook to the side of Goyle's head, knocking him out. He then went for Malfoy, grabbing his arm just as he was sending a curse Harry's way causing it to hit Crabbe instead. He knocked Malfoy's wand out of his hand and swung his arm behind his back pinning him to the compartment wall. Using his free hand Harry reached around and grabbed him by the throat and in a menacing voice whispered in his ear.

“Malfoy you listen and you listen good. I am not going to put up with your shit. We have to spend time on the same train one last time, stay out of my way or I will make sure you wake up in the fucking hospital. Do I make myself clear.” Malfoy shaking with fright simply nodded. Harry, about to release him took a good look at his long time nemesis then with almost a bored tone said “why the hell not.” With a swift jerk of his wrist he quickly dislocated Draco's shoulder. Whimpering in pain he was thrown out of the compartment and landed on top of the unconscious forms of Crabbe and Goyle, surrounded by many dumbstruck students.

The trip to platform 9 3/4 was uneventful to say the least. Ron and the others tried to get him to talk but he would just ignore them. When they were almost to London Ron decided to try a different approach. “Harry why do you want to leave, I mean we are your friends, we care about you so does Cho, I thought you loved her?” At this Harry could no longer remain silent.

“Ron I don't love Cho, I had a crush on her that I used to cover my true feelings for someone else, someone I can't have.” At this admission Ron looked shocked but he wasn't going to give up.

“What makes you think you can't have her, have you even tried?”

“No, she's way out of my league.” When he said this his eyes drifted over to Ginny and then back to Ron but no one seemed to notice but Ginny and Hermione. “I'm sorry Ron but I have to go.” And with that said he left the train and walked through the barrier into Kings Cross Station.

Harry had waited nearly two hours for his Uncle Vernon to come pick him up at the station when he finally got sick of waiting and took a taxi back to number 4 Privet Drive. But when he got there the sight that met him was not what he expected. It seemed Dudley had one of his famous temper tantrums and tore the house apart, which all in all wasn't all that unusual. Dreading what the kitchen looked like Harry just sucked it up and walk in and looked on in horror at the sight before him.

Chapter Three: Consequences and Repercussions

Harry stood as if rooted to that spot. His mind completely shut down, unable to take in the sight before him. Just in front of him lay the bodies of his 'family'. Looks of absolute terror etched painfully across their faces. As Harry began to come out of his near comatose state, his mind was filling with extreme panic. Remembering the face of Cedric Diggory as he lay there, in that musty old grave yard. Killed by Voldemort just so he could get to him. He thought of his godfather, Sirius Black, and how he died just days before. He started imagining the images of his friends and loved ones, all killed because of him. Hermione, Hagrid, Remus, Dumbledore, the Weasleys. His mind was swirling, he could not take this not anymore. He did not want to be responsible for anyone else getting hurt because Voldemort wanted him out of the way.

With his mind made up he walked over to the counter and opened the second cabinet and removed a long thin carving knife. With a determined mind he quickly ran the knife over his left fore arm. He then did the same to his right. Looking at the two wounds Harry almost felt at peace. He watched as the thick red blood ran down his arms only to fall to the floor. Out of no where the rage Harry had been feeling the last few days bubbled back up and he proceeded to make cut after cut after cut, until his arms looked as though they had been through a meat grinder. His head started spinning from blood loss and he began falling to the ground. Suddenly there was a blinding golden light then all went black.

Professor Dumbledore was sitting at his desk that evening doing the last bit of paper work for the end of the term. He was about to head down to dinner when his office door burst open and the Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge hurried in.

"Aright Dumbledore where's the boy?" Fudge huffed as if the headmaster already knew why he was here.

"And which boy might that be Cornelius?" Dumbledore asked looking very confused.

"Potter of course, he is to be placed under arrest!"

"Under what charge?" asked a shocked looking Dumbledore.

"Murder, we registered the use of one of the unforgivables at his place of residence earlier and went to investigate. We found his aunt, uncle and cousin dead, killed by the killing curse. We found no trace of Potter or his belongings. So he must have murdered them then ran away." Fudge replied as if the situation was completely obvious.

"Cornelius what belongings do you mean?"

"His school supplies of course." Answered a very annoyed minister

"Well if you mean those supplies over there, I think just looking at them will answer some of your questions." The minister walked around the desk to look at

Harry's trunk.

"What happened, who did this?" Fudge asked with shock on his face.

"Last night during the feast Harry came into the Great Hall dragging his trunk behind him. When he reached the head table he turned to survey the students and even the teachers. He was obviously not trying to hide his animosity and contempt for everyone there including myself which is understandable. He proceeded to tell the students how he felt about them. About the way they had treated him over the years. The fact that everyone in our world seems to look for reasons to turn on him. Which I am sad to say apparently happened to often. He then kicked open his trunk and set it and everything in it on fire. Including his father's invisibility cloak. He then looked at the stunned students once more, snapped his wand in half and left the hall vowing to never come back to our world." Dumbledore finished looking and feeling older than time itself. With that he got up and started walking for the door.

"Where are you going Albus?" Fudge asked barely above a whisper. Dumbledore turned to face the minister and said simply, "I'm going to go find Harry." And with that he left to go see Arabella Figg.

Within twenty minutes he was walking up the little garden path leading up to Mrs. Figg's front door. If he had had time to notice he would have found the garden to be quite beautiful. Flowers of different shades of red, blue, and yellow. Plants and bushes trimmed and pruned to perfection. But he didn't notice, too much was going on that was much more important to stop and smell the roses. He could not however overlook the cats. "Looks like she got a few more," he thought to himself as he made it to the door.

After Arabella did not answer the door his hopes that Harry had come over here were diminishing. Worried about what he would find he cautiously opened the door with his wand in his hand. What he saw dashed all his hopes. Laying in the middle of the floor was the mutilated body of Mrs. Figg. Realizing she was dead he looked around the room for any sign that Harry might have been here. What he saw struck fear into his heart. On the wall, written in blood was a message obviously meant for Harry to find. "You can't save them all Potter!" With that he quickly apparated to 'the Borrow'.

Unfortunately he appeared right in the middle of a fight and almost got his head blown off by a very excited Ginny Weasley. "Oh, shit, um sorry professor."

"Quite alright Virginia. No need to apologize." Was his reply as he quickly took cover and watched as Ginny stunned two Death Eaters. The entire Weasley family, minus Percy, was holding off what looked to be about twenty Death Eaters from the second floor landing of the normally tranquil lopsided house known as the Burrow. The Death Eaters seemed to be having a lot of trouble getting off the ground floor due to the heavy resistance of the Weasleys on the landing above.

Ginny soon got up, much to the protest of her mother, and made her way over to the twins, Fred and George. "Fred do you have any more of those firecrackers you used on Professor Umbridge?"

“Yes, why?” He asked with no small amount of suspicion in his voice. Ginny, a little annoyed that they couldn’t already guess and just go get them, merely nodded her head in the direction of the Death Eaters with a mischievous gleam in her eye. Understanding what she had in mind they got the same look as wide grins formed across their faces. They immediately turned towards their room and took off with Ginny deflecting curses heading their way. After they made it she moved back towards her mother who had been yelling for Fred and George to get back out there.

“Calm down mum they’ll be back. I just had an idea and they went to go get the stuff for it.”

Mrs. Weasley looked at her daughter as if she had gone crazy. “Now what could you possibly come up with that would require something out of their.....” Then it hit her. Surprising to Ginny, her mother got the same maniacal grin the twins usually gave before they decided to use you as a guinea pig for their latest inventions. A few moments later the twins returned with a box that seemed to be fit for a large pair of shoes.

“Alright George, in a minute drop the box down there, right by the group by the fire....”

“Wait, the whole box? That will toast everything down there.” Fred objected quickly.

“Fred would you rather it were our ass’s that are toasted or their’s?” Ginny commented. “Ok you drop the box, Fred sets it off and everyone covers their eyes. After it’s gone off count to five then get up and blast everything moving down there. Except the lights, I don’t feel like getting that little surprise today. Ok everyone ready?” Ginny finished, everyone nodded while giving her strange looks of surprise. No one knew she had leadership abilities and strong ones at that. After George dropped the box everyone got down for Fred to set it off.

BOOM

In a blinding flash of light cries of panic could be heard. The Death Eaters below had no clue what was going on. Even if they could see they still wouldn’t know. On the count of five the Weasleys and Dumbledore jumped up and began stunning the Death Eaters below. In a matter of moments it was over. With thirteen Death Eaters captured all in all it was a good day’s work. Now if only it hadn’t been in their living room.

Fred was right, it sure toasted just about everything down there, including the Death Eaters, but it could all be repaired so they did not think much of it. After they called the Ministry and informed them of what had happened and Aurors came to collect the captured Death Eaters, Dumbledore turned to the others.

“Molly, I would like you to take your family to Hogwarts until we get this straightened out.” Mrs. Weasley answered with a sharp nod. “Arthur I would like you to go and collect Miss Lovegood and Mr. Longbottom and bring them and there

families to the school as well. I will go and get Miss Granger and meet you back there.”

“What about Harry?” Asked Ron.

“Ronald, all will be explained once we are safely within Hogwarts walls. Now I suggest we get moving quickly.” And with that Dumbledore and Mr. Weasley disappeared and Mrs. Weasley went outside to call the Night Bus.

His head was pounding and his stomach was turning over it's self. His entire body felt as if it had been trampled by Hagrid's 'little' brother Grawp. Opening his eyes he saw that he was in a circular room with bare white walls and nothing in it save the four poster bed he was now on that sat in the center of the room. As he was looking around the room he did not notice a man enter to his right.

“Good morning Harry, sleep well?” asked the man in a deep baritone. Harry turned sharply to look at him. He was about six and a half feet tall, between two twenty and two fifty. Dark brown hair, almost black, that came down to just passed his shoulders and startling deep blue eyes. His features were that of one who would be considered handsome but it was quite clear he could look terrifying if he so wished.

Seeing that Harry was confused he began to speak. “Harry, my name is.. Um let me think.”

“You have to think about your name, you must not get out much.”

“Yes, that's true, I don't get out much but that is not the reason. You see I have a different name to all the different people I have trained down through the centuries. By now it's hard to come up with something original.” Said the man with a shrug.

“Wait a minute, what do you mean train me, train me for what?” Harry asked. The man sighed and mumbled something like, “that's always the first question.” He looked towards Harry and said one simple word. “Voldemort.”

“Why should I give a shit about him anymore, I'm not going back there any way, that son of a bitch has already taken everything have.” Snapped Harry

“Only after we have lost everything are we free to do anything.” He said looking into Harry's eyes. “You on the other hand have not lost everything. You have teachers and friends that care about you, and before you say it, no I am not talking about those so called ‘fare weather friends’, I mean your real friends. Ahh, look at this you even have a girl that thinks the world of you.”

“What are you talking about? There is no girl that could possible like me for anything but being the famous ‘boy who lived’”

“Yeah well I don't understand it either, you are an ugly bastard.” He replied sarcastically. “But she does!”

Chapter Four: Observational Assessment

“Ok I got it, you can call me Forge, yes I like that.” The man replied after what felt like an eternity thinking of a name.

“You have got to be kidding me.” Was Harry’s only reply.

“No I am not kidding. I have been watching your world for many hundreds of years looking for people worthy of my time and expertise. You can imagine how boring that gets after a while. Well one day I was watching and I came across your school and watched as two young redheaded twins set off those marvelous firecrackers in your school. After seeing the utter chaos it caused I went and looked through the rest of there lives and watched as every joke or prank played out. My god that was fun.” The self proclaimed ‘Forge’ finished with a look is his eye that is commonly seen in old women looking at a new born baby.

“Well alright Forge, just what exactly are you going to train me in?” Forge had a simple answer for this as he spread his arms out and proclaimed “everything”.

“Everything uh, well that could take a while.” Harry replied looking at the man as if he were insane.

“Who cares, time doesn’t mean anything here. You could spend ten years here training and learning and then go back to your world at anytime, anywhere, with exceptions of course.”

“And what exceptions are those?” Harry asked feeling as if he already knew the answer.

“That’s simple really, you can’t change the past. You will not be able to go to where you already are. Unlike a time turner where you can go back and forth as you wish to even watch yourself doing something, as you watched yourself on the Hogwarts grounds in your third year. This way you can not place yourself where there is already one of you, there for you cannot go back and be within one hundred miles of your past self. To due so would cause a paradox in time.. Future of course does not matter because you are here so there is no you on earth to make a future.”

“Ok that was a bit long winded.” Harry muttered to himself then turned back to Forge. “So you said you would train me in everything, what exactly does that include. I would like an idea of what to expect.” At this Forge just grinned.

“Harry believe me when I tell you, you will still have no idea what to expect. But what the hell I’ll humor you.” Forge then took a few deep breaths as if he were about to start a marathon. Then he began. “I will instruct you in dueling techniques, magical and muggle, as well as battle tactics, on field and the strategies behind them. You will be drilled in physical fitness; you are looking a bit flabby. I will teach you to use the sword, mace, lance, battle ax, as well as any other weapon I feel like both muggle and magical.. You will learn the art of assassination, espionage, unarmed combat, survival skills and..... POTIONS” He finished with a wicked gleam in his eyes. One look at Harry and you could tell he was not looking forward to this last one.

“Ok” Harry started, “that’s all fine but how am I going to learn magic, I snapped my wand the other day.”

“And a good thing you did to. Wands are clumsy things, you saved me the trouble of having to snap it myself when you got here.”

“Save you the trouble, it’s just breaking a piece of wood.” Forge just shrugged.

“What can I say, I’m just lazy.” Harry rolled his eyes and followed after him.

When everyone was gathered in Professor Dumbledore’s office and calmed down after the night’s events they got down to business. “Professor where is Harry?” Was the question voiced by most in the room.

“I am sorry to say that I do not know where Harry is. The Ministry went to his home earlier when one of the Unforgivables was registered there. Upon their entry of the house they found the Dursleys dead and Harry missing. Even though he no longer has a wand Fudge still believes Harry responsible.”

“Albus what do you mean that Harry has no wand? What happened to his?” Asked a hysterical Molly Weasley. Dumbledore then turned his eyes to Ron and Ginny and their looks confirmed that they had not had time to tell the rest of their family about Harry before the Death Eaters attacked. The Headmaster then recounted the unfortunate events of the night before. Those that did not already know listened in shocked silence first to the headmaster then to Harry’s friends as they spoke of how he seemed on the train back to London.

“When we pulled into the station and were getting ready to get off he looked relieved and as if he couldn’t get out of there fast enough.” Ginny said sadly tears running down her face.

Mr. Granger then spoke up for the first time. “How... how could they treat him that way? I mean all the wizards and witches we have met seem to think that Harry is the sole reason your world isn’t a crumbling ruin, yet they turn on him just like that. How many times does the poor boy have to prove himself to them. Now that Fudge character wants to arrest him for murdering his family when it seems to be impossible on an evidence standpoint. I think the boy had the right idea. No one should have that kind of pressure put on them, let alone a child. Yet they all looked up to him to defeat this dark lord and all his followers by himself while they sit at home behind their locked doors pretending nothing is happening. Living in their own fantasy world where nothing bad is going to happen to them. They rest all their hopes and their dreams on the shoulders of a young boy to do everything for them. Well what happens if he fails, what if he can’t do it? Well I’ll tell you what would happen. Shockingly enough it’s the same thing that would happen if he succeeded. He would be tossed aside, no longer needed. He’s done his deed now who cares what happens to him. To them he’s ‘the boy who lived’ a weapon, not a boy. He realized this and left. When that gets into the papers mix that with this Voldemort clown your going to have panic on your hands, and why? A few misleading news paper articles maybe? Some false rumors? No, neither of those things. In the end it was because you expected a fifteen

year old boy to be a god, and he couldn't measure up, after all who could?" When he finished speaking everyone was looking at him like he had two heads, including Hermione.

"Well I think you hit it right on the head." Replied a rather shocked Mrs. Weasley. She herself had thought the same things from time to time but never really voiced those thoughts often at all. Everyone in the office had a thoughtful look on their face as they all thought the same thing. How come they didn't say anything about it? And they all came up with the same unfortunate answer. They all hoped that they were imagining it, that it wasn't really that way, and some of them thinking sadly to themselves that they were also guilty of laying this burden on his young shoulders.

"Hey Harry come here, you've got to see this!" Yelled Forge as if there was nothing more interesting to do at that precise moment.

"Alright I'm coming." Walking towards Forge was a young man well over six feet tall, roughly two hundred and thirty pounds with raven black hair flowing half way to his elbows, as well as eyes of the deepest green. "What are you watching now?" he asked simply.

"I'm watching your headmaster's office."

"Really, what's the old bastard doing now?"

"Well he seems to be talking to your friends." Harry then moved over to the basin and began watching with Forge just in time to hear Mr. Granger's little speech.

"Damn, I've never heard him talk so much and for a muggle he has an extremely firm grasp on the situation. When was this any way?"

"Oh, that was the same night that I grabbed you and brought you here. Apparently some Death Eaters decided to have a little fun but got in way over there head with a certain little redhead."

"So I'm guessing that meeting was held right after the attack on the Weasleys then." When Forge nodded Harry looked around as if looking for something. "Forge how long do people usually stay here?" After thinking for a moment he replied,

"Usually between eight months too a year." Harry nodded.

"Well I've already been here eleven months. I will probably stay and make it an even two years." He replied after thinking a moment.

"Harry you do realize that you have already learned almost everything I could possible teach you."

"Yes I do but there is always more to learn and a lot of extra practice won't hurt either. Besides I learned quite a bit of it with out any help from you." Harry retorted.

"Hey don't blame me I told you the first day you were here that I was lazy. So

why don't you go back to practicing and leave me to have fun." Harry rolled his eyes and went back to the training courtyard.

Forge who was far from as lazy as he appeared watched as Harry walked away. He had been wondering for some time now if Harry could go farther than many of the others before. He had certainly shown that he is willing and more than able to possibly raise his training up to a higher and much more dangerous level. With these thoughts turning over in his head he made his way to his chambers and drifted off to sleep simply thinking, "We shall find out tomorrow."

Chapter Five: The Strength of One

Mr. Granger's words seemed to ring true as the Daily Prophet the next day had printed the story of Harry's actions at the end of term feast. The people were in a panicked state. It was not this story alone however that caused this uproar! It was also do to the fact that in the same issue was the story of Harry's relatives being found murdered and the Ministry's, namely Minister Fudge's, belief that Harry was responsible. Most people found it hard to believe but nonetheless accepted the Minister's explanation that Harry's anger and contempt for the wizarding world and his open admission of his family's hatred for him led him to seek revenge and is now working for 'he-who-must-not-be-named'. Never mind the fact that he no longer had a wand, which he conveniently enough had pressured the editors to leave out that little detail. Thus the people were terrified. Voldemort alone was bad enough but now joined with Harry Potter, the people could see no hope.

Those who believed in Harry, mostly those students and teachers present in the Great Hall that night, were made out in the press as 'conspiracy theorists' and ridiculed as people who let their emotions and imaginations cloud the 'facts' of the situation. Voldemort for his part was taking full advantage of this new development and stepped up his attacks. Every day brought more news and more deaths. The dark mark was now flying in the air all over Europe not just Great Britain. Whole divisions of Aurors were wiped out by armies of countless Death Eaters. The Ministries of Europe were losing control and were on the brink of collapse by summer's end.

Sitting in Professor Dumbledore's office was a small group of wizards and witches still actively working hard to fight Voldemort as well as find Harry. Most of the wizarding world had given up hope that their 'golden boy' would return to save them as they now believed him to be working with the enemy.

"This is getting harder and harder Albus. Fudge's support within the Ministry is all but absolute. Our supporters are getting thin. Those we do have will never support us openly in fear of losing their jobs or becoming targets of you know who." Arthur Weasley reported sadly. "There is also some more rather disturbing news. Apparently Lucius Malfoy was able to talk his way out of Azkaban. He along with the others he was taken with, were released about six hours ago." Everyone in the room sat there shocked for several moments before the silence was broken by a very pissed off Ron Weasley.

"How the fuck did that slimy bastard get out. He nearly killed us, was found in

Death Eater robes and had the Dark Mark. How could he possibly talk his way out of that?"

"Ronald Weasley, you watch your language or I'll make you regret you ever got up this morning. Do you understand me." Shouted a very flustered Mrs. Weasley, doing her very famous, not to mention feared, imitation of a saber tooth tiger. After everyone recovered from Molly's outburst Arthur explained.

"Well it would seem the Lucius convinced Fudge that they were spies recently initiated into Voldemort's ranks. He claims he decided to use the fact that he was once accused of being a Death Eater to 'our' advantage. He informed Fudge that they were to meet Harry at the Department of Mysteries to retrieve that prophecy. Unfortunately Harry was unable to shake his friends off so he was forced to fight alongside them as to not blow his cover. Fudge was also informed that Harry has been working in collusion with the Dark Lord since his rebirth during the Tri-Wizard Tournament last year. Malfoy now holds the position of Senior Undersecretary to Minister Fudge." Arthur finished to the shocked faces staring at him from all sides.

"This is outrageous! How can that man be so damn gullible? I do not think Potter is responsible for the death of my son in that accursed tournament nor do I blame him in any way. If I can look past the rumors why can't everyone else." Mr. Diggery proclaimed angrily.

"I do not believe Fudge to be as gullible as he seems." At the other's confused looks Ginny elaborated. "You see Fudge lost a lot of support when it came out that he had known the truth about Vol- Voldemort's return for a year but choose to ignore and disbelieve it despite the obvious. Then Harry's relatives turn up dead and Harry missing and he took the opportunity to shift the attention away from his own short comings to Harry's alleged crime. He pressured the Prophet to suppress the fact that Harry no longer has a wand for a reason. As long as Harry is discredited and thought to be an ally to the Dark Lord since the time of his return, maybe even before, he can sit back and claim that Harry had dropped subtle hints that his story was a fabrication to cover up that he was indeed responsible for Cedric's death but there was not enough evidence to convict him. As long as Harry is discredited and a wanted criminal Fudge's tenure as Minister of Magic is secure. He is milking it for all its worth and the people are eating it up. He let Malfoy out for one reason and that is for 'evidence that Harry is indeed a Death Eater or perhaps even a dark lord of his own waging war against us and Voldemort.'" When Ginny finished her suspicions once again everyone sat in stunned silence.

"Weasley that is one very perceptive daughter you have there." Said a very shocked not to mention impressed Professor Snape. Arthur could do nothing but nod and stare.

"You know now that Ginny brings up the possibility it does sound a bit obvious. Fudge has always loved his position and power. When Voldemort's return came out his support was slipping away. Professor Dumbledore here and Harry became far more influential than fudge, with the common people and within the ministry. If he could find a way change that he would not hesitate to take. He found his way now he is running with it. Harry is now a wanted criminal. And Dumbledore and all of us are

seen as incompetent and irresponsible for being deceived by a mere 'child' and some of us are even being investigated by the Ministry for aiding him." McGonagal added stiffly.

"If Harry knew what was going on he would be very angry!"

"Angry! Hermione he would be furious. You saw him at the feast and that was because of people constantly doubting him. It's gone way beyond that now, their calling for his head. If they find him he will either be killed on sight or given the dementor's kiss. Either way he won't get a chance to defend himself, Fudge won't allow it." Ron retorted.

"The problem is if Harry manages to get back to help fight Voldemort people will believe that he is doing it for his own advantage. To get him out of the way for him to take over and the Aurors and the Ministry will be all over him. If he doesn't come back we are lost. Neither sounds very appealing." Said a mournful headmaster. "The only good thing in this is that if we can't find him then neither can the ministry but even that has a drawback." He added as an afterthought.

"Oh and what's that Albus?" "Simple Molly.

"Until we find him or he contacts us there is still the possibility that Voldemort has gotten his hands on him."

"But if that were true he would surely have boasted that he had killed him. That is something that a man with his ego would not have kept quiet."

"Neville what do you find more terrifying? Facing Voldemort? Or facing Voldemort with Harry by his side? Whether Harry is alive or dead, he will surely keep quiet on the matter." Luna added, finally taking interest in the conversation.

Suddenly Remus Lupin burst through the door, a look of extreme urgency on his face. "Albus I have just gotten back from Dresden. Voldemort launched a surprise attack this morning. In total about two hundred death eaters."

"How many dead?" Albus asked solemnly.

"Well that's the surprising thing. You see we only lost twelve."

"What, how is that possible? We have only a handful of people there, how did they fight off so many?" Everyone was clearly shocked by this news. Remus then continued very excited.

"Well you see our people had nothing to do with it, they were not even aware of a fight until it was well underway. When they went to help intercept the Death Eaters they were shocked to say the least."

"Well get on with it will you." Prompted Snape.

"Well fighting the Death Eaters was only one man." At everyone's shocked

expressions he continued. "Apparently the man was running circles around the Death Eaters, making them seem almost like lost little children. The people I talked to found it almost comical. The strange thing is the man was not caring a wand but instead carried a large broadsword with a massive battle ax strapped to his back. He also seems to be a master at wandless magic and moves with speed no one has seen before. All in all they were very excited."

"And didn't the possibility that they were embellishing the story a bit strike you." Snape asked a little disbelieving, not that the others could blame him. At this it seemed Remus grew even more excited.

"The thought had crossed my mind but that quickly faded as I got more reports from all over the region. The same situation in four other locations across Europe on average just a few hours apart. First hit was Hamburg at nine o'clock this morning, then Normandy almost two hours later. St. Petersburg was next, then Dresden. The fifth and final location surprisingly enough was Diagon Alley forty five minutes ago. At all five locations the witnesses report the same thing. One man carrying a sword and battle ax, using wandless magic and absolutely decimating the opposite forces. At final count nearly two hundred and forty Death Eaters dead with many more captured. With the five locations combined we only lost thirty seven civilians."

"What did this man look like?" asked Hagrid.

"Well he was gone before anyone could get a good look at him, but once again the descriptions are the same. They say he is roughly six foot four maybe a shade under two fifty with long black hair. No one saw anything of his face."

"Wow, if we could get this man to come and fight with us..." Ron was immediately cut off by Remus.

"I don't think that will happen Ron. From what I have heard this man takes his business very personal. After the fighting he questioned the Death Eaters he had captured with a truth agent we don't know about. All the agents we use are clear but from the witnesses standpoint he was using a purple one. During his questionings no one was allowed near so they don't know what information he was after but they seemed completely rational and extremely terrified. After they were questioned he wiped their memories of the interrogation and left leaving them for the towns people to deal with."

"Severus do you have any idea what that potion was?" Professor Dumbledore asked with curiosity

"I have a pretty good feeling but I would like to check up on it first headmaster." Snape replied with a thoughtful yet excited look about him.

"Please Severus just give us your theory for the moment."

"Alright! Well from the description and the manner in which it was used points to a very little known potion discovered many centuries ago but due to side effects it was banned a matter of days later. It does not even have a name. Even having the

formula for it was outlawed. I only knew of one book that even speaks of it and it is quite clear that someone tried to dispose of it in a hurry at some point or another.”

“What exactly does this potion do?”

“Well most truth agents work by putting the subject into an almost hypnotized state. They speak freely and answer your questions simply because they are unable to keep their thoughts to themselves. But one can also build up an immunity to even the stronger of the potions. That is where this is different. You see with this potion the subject is completely awake and rational, they have the ability to choose whether to tell the truth or not. But they always do.”

“Why?” Hermione asked in almost morbid fascination.

“Because Granger to lie would cause them pain beyond that of even the Cruciatus Curse ten fold. From what I read on it each time it was tested, when the first lie that was told less than two seconds later they were screaming the truth and even confessing to things they could not possibly have done. If this man is using this on Death Eaters then Lupin is right. This is very personal to him and he will not seek or except our help unless there is something he gets in return and with a man like this if he wants anything from us you can be sure it is worth to shock just about anyone.”

“Well let’s call it a night, with the rest of the students returning tomorrow we are in for a long day.” Taking that as their dismissal they all stood and began leaving the office thinking of what they had just heard and what was to come.

Chapter Six: The Return

The following evening Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Neville were sitting at the Gryffindor table waiting for the rest of the students to arrive. All within the Great Hall were lost in their thoughts wondering what the students thought of the whole situation regarding Harry. “You know Malfoy is going to be completely unbearable this year.” Ron observed. Everyone else just nodded not wanting to think about it.

They were pulled out of their thoughts as the doors to the Great Hall opened and the students began to pour in. Their classmates reactions to what had been printed in the paper all summer was clearly obvious as the majority glared at the four Gryffindors as they made their way to their own tables. Malfoy walked by, flanked as usual by his two goons, with a rather broad smirk on his face. They did not have long to dwell on this as Professor McGonagall led the first years up towards the front of the hall. The sorting took a very short amount of time due to the surprisingly small number of new students, the majority of which were sorted into Gryffindor much to Malfoy’s chagrin. Just as Professor Dumbledore was rising to give his usual start of term speech the doors to the hall again burst open.

This time however there was but a lone figure in the doorway gazing across the hall as if sizing them up. He was well over six feet tall but his stance made him appear to be taller. Strapped to his back was a massive broadsword and in his hand he carried a battle ax that was just as impressive. The hood of his cloak gave the appearance that

his face was shrouded in shadow. As he stood there Draco Malfoy clearly seeing that this man was very dangerous decided to go introduce himself. With a smug superiority about him we walked over and stopped in front of the man and stuck out his hand.

“Hello, my name is Draco Malfoy, my father is....” He never had time to finish as the stranger’s hand shot out and gripping Draco by the neck lifted him a good ten inches off the ground. As Draco struggled to breath and free himself the stranger pulled him in and in a menacing voice whispered in his ear.

“Last time we met, I told you to stay out of my way.” Almost as an after thought he added. “How’s your shoulder?” Quickly Draco realized who this man was and began to panic until a stunning spell was shot from the front of the hall. Draco was thrown back and landed on the Ravenclaw’s table as the stranger quickly raised his ax and blocked the curse. At the head table most of the teachers were on their feet with wands raised.

“How dare you attack one of my students.” Snapped Professor Snape, surprise clearly registered in his voice. At the other end of the hall the stranger simply raised his battle ax, pointing it at Professor Snape, and in a voice that shook the very pillars of heaven responded.

“Try that again, and I will split you open like rotted fruit.” He then lowered his ax and made his way to Professor Dumbledore. As he reached the table he leaned in and gave his reason for being there.

“Death Eaters are on their way here now. They will be here in about five minutes I suggest you keep all of these back stabbing pricks in here.” Dumbledore was shocked by this last statement and his suspicions were confirmed when the man looked up and he was confronted with a pair of blazing green eyes. Dumbledore simply nodded, to shocked for words. An instant later the man was walking purposefully out of the hall towards the entrance hall. Everyone that was at the meeting the night before was completely shocked. This was clearly the man that Remus had spoke of. Only Dumbledore knew of his reasons for being there and he was walking over to the windows facing out to the forbidden forest. Curiosity overtaking them they followed as well as many of the students.

When they reached the windows they were met with an interesting sight and many students began to panic as they saw close to fifty Death Eaters emerging from the forest. But standing on the grounds about thirty yards in front of them was the man that had just left the hall.

“Is that man insane, he is going to get himself killed.” Shouted Dean Thomas, who immediately took a liking to this stranger after his encounter with Malfoy, as did most Gryffindors.

“I don’t think so Dean, but I have a feeling those Death Eaters are about to have a bad day.”

“What are you talking about Weasley? It’s fifty to one out there.” Questioned a

very nervous Blasie Zambini who, although a Slytherin, had no love for Malfoy.

“Just watch,” was his only reply.

Harry stood outside on the carefully manicured grounds of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry waiting for Voldemort’s followers to emerge from the cover of the forbidden forest. A few moments later they began to appear. Much to his disappointment once again they were simple new recruits. None of them had that much skill and it was quite clear by the way they were carrying themselves they had no experience with hand to hand combat. Preferring instead to rely solely on their wands. Voldemort and his followers were known to shun physical violence. They think it beneath them, if someone was to be tortured, that person is not worthy to be touched by them. Thus there was no need to learn these skills. But when fighting in close quarters, these skills are not ‘useful’, they are essential.

Voldemort had been using men like this all day; test the defenses of different locations across Europe. Sending these imbeciles to die. Not so much testing the Light’s ability to defend but more testing the abilities of these new followers. Weeding out the weak and intimidated. He had no use for this kind of man. Some believe there is strength in numbers but Voldemort knew that if the numbers were weak then they do you no good.

When they had all emerged from the trees they were shocked to find one man standing defiantly in their way. They found it almost amusing that the great school of Hogwarts had sent but one man to defend it. Looking almost bored they raised their wands and sent a variety of curses and hexes his way. But they quickly grew apprehensive as all their curses were deflected even two killing curses. They were about to send another round of curses when Harry suddenly charged closing the distance between himself and the Death Eaters so rapidly it was unbelievable. Fifteen yards to his targets he leapt high into the air and landed among the group of astonished Death Eaters, his ax swinging true as he cut his way through the shocked and frightened wizards. He was ready to strike out again when the weapon was suddenly kicked from his hand. Before he had even completely let go of the massive blade he had dropped to ground and swept the legs out from under the man. As the man tried to sit back up he was met with the back of Harry’s heel colliding with the side of his head sending him back down unconscious. Removing the broadsword from his back he continued his destruction of Voldemort’s forces with almost casual ease.

The students and teachers alike watched with an almost morbid fascination. As much as some of them wanted to turn away they just couldn’t seem to make the muscles respond to their screaming minds. After only a matter of minutes it seemed that it was over and Professor Snape turned to Remus, looking rather pale. “Lupin it would appear that your witnesses were not exaggerating.”

“No Snape, it would seem they down played it a bit. Though I must say that he is good. He is using no magic what so ever, with the exception of that shield charm which I might add deflected two killing curses.” Was his response, himself looking quite shocked that one man could do so much.

When the fight was finished Harry began rounding up the survivors and putting them

together, each under a binding spell. He then woke them all and prepared to begin questioning them when he caught sight of Professor Dumbledore, Snape, Lupin and McGonagall walking across the grounds towards him. Sighing in exasperation, with a simple wave of his hand he raised a shield as well as a sound barrier around himself as well as the Death Eaters.

The Professors could do nothing but watch as Harry administered the purple potion to all the survivors. Nothing seemed to happen until Harry began talking to them. When he finished one man made to answer. His eyes immediately grew wide and his mouth opened in a silent scream of intense pain. "Well it would seem your theory was correct Severus." Dumbledore commented as the man began speaking at great length.

After twenty minutes of questioning the barriers were brought down and the Death Eaters were all stunned. The Professors were a little reluctant at first but they slowly began to approach him. Dumbledore not wanting to expose Harry acted the same as the others and asked with a little awe in his voice. "I must thank you for the protection of our school, as well as a number of cities this day. Is there anything that we can do for you?"

"The only thing I want right now is on its way here." He replied in a cool baritone.

"And what might that be?" Professor asked curiously. As a reply he handed the Headmaster a piece of parchment and began walking towards the school.

Dumbledore looked at the parchment in his hand and his eyes lit up as he realized what he intended to do.

"Albus what is it?" McGonagall asked with concern.

"Something very interesting is going to happen here tonight." He chuckled and handed her the parchment.

"Albus we can not let that man in there, he has already attacked one student."

"And how do you plan to stop him, but I assure you it will be alright. This man and Mr. Malfoy have had a very volatile past. Clearly young Draco did not recognize him at first. Those two have a good deal of animosity for each other."

"You know this man headmaster?" Snape was clearly shocked by this development.

"Of course I know him, so do you, all of you." Seeing their confused expressions he went on. "Tell me, who do you know that has been out of sight for a while, takes the fight against Voldemort and his followers very personally and has a deep seeded hatred for the Malfoys?" He finished. As understanding flashed in their eyes Dumbledore chuckled and headed off to his school.

An hour later found Harry standing in the corner of the Great Hall just behind the head table. All the students had remained in the Great Hall on Harry's instructions and were growing restless when the doors opened and dozens of wizards and witches filed in looking confused and some a little pale at seeing the carnage outside.

Hermione and the others looked up to see Mr. Weasley as well as all the other department heads, cabinet ministers, and even Fudge himself was their accompanied by his new undersecretary Lucius Malfoy.

“All right Dumbledore what is the meaning of all of this? The attack was over an hour ago why haven’t the grounds been cleaned up?” Fudge demanded pompously.

“Minister that would be fault.” Came a cool voice from the shadows as Harry came out from the corner with his hood up and resting his ax on his shoulder. “You see I had the bodies left where they feel for a reason. I thought I should put this whole situation, this whole war in perspective for you. You see many of your ministers of various departments are carrying on as if this does not effect them. Many of you believe that your positions in government, places you above the danger. Well from what you can see outside your positions do not protect you in that it does not protect your children. You cannot continue to ignore the obvious for your own gains.”

“I suspect you are the man that has been ‘dancing’ around the continent all day stopping Death Eater attacks by yourself?” Fudge interrupted with no small amount of contempt. “So you are you and what do you want?”

“Politicians! You’re all the same. You think that because someone does something to help another that they, in return, want something of you. What I want I cannot get from you!”

“And what might that be?” Fudge asked with a sneer.

“Voldemort!” Gasps were heard throughout the hall as people flinched at his name. “I want him alone, and introduce him to this.” He said as he ran his thumb over the blade of his ax. “But the problem is it is not just Voldemort out there anymore. I stopped seven out of eight attacks today. Six by Voldemort and one of two by this new dark wizard. His second attack is not yet finished.”

“Then why don’t you go stop it?” Malfoy piped up, malice dripping from every syllable.

“Simple, the attack is playing out, right in front of us.” This got everyone looking extremely nervous and confused. “Think people, think. Poison, every ministry head. Every key official. Every auror team leader as well as a number of other employees and prominent members of the press. All of whom now stand in this room. While questioning the ‘few’ survivors of one of today’s attacks I was lucky enough to find the actual assassin who carried out the job. He gave me all I needed to know.” Harry finished with a rather intimidating grin.

Fudge was clearly scared, “How do you know that he did not lie. Even truth potions can be worked around?”

“No he was telling the truth.”

“And how can you be so sure?” Malfoy asked snidely.

“Because I have a very exotic method of extracting the information I need, and I don’t stop until I get it. Now I have made up the antidote so when I call your name come up here and get it then go get checked out by madam Pomfrey. We will be going in alphabetical order s…….”

“Well actually young man I think we should go in descending order of power, you know to preserve the... um ah, the chain of command. And this way if anything is wrong with your antidote then we will know that before everyone else has taken it.” He continued babbling reasons why he should take it first while everyone was looking at him with extreme distaste due to his behavior.

“Fine, fine, fine, just shut up and take the damn thing so we can get a move on.” Fudge walked up to Harry eagerly as Harry removed a vial from his robes. Dumbledore and the other three professors that knew of this man’s identity were shocked as he withdrew the same purple liquid he had used on the Death Eaters. When Fudge reached him Harry quietly put up a shield around himself and Fudge. After placing one drop on his tongue Harry conjured a chair right behind Fudge and threw him into it binding him to the chair of his own accord. After he made sure everything was secure he looked around at the fifty or so wands pointed at him. The faces of their owners clearly betraying their shock as none of their curses penetrated his shield. “My, what a gullible breed.”

“Now, I am going to say this once and only once. Keep your fucking mouths shut unless spoken to. Try testing my shield again and I will start sending some back. Curses can leave this shield but they will not enter. There is another surrounding this hall, no one comes or goes until I say. Do I make myself clear?” Harry said in a booming voice that left no room for arguments.

“Can you at least let the students go they have done nothing to you....” The young auror was cut off by a very angry Harry.

“That is precisely why they will remain. They, and you have done far more damage to me than Voldemort ever could and I want them to know that it is not convenient to forget. They will learn, as you will learn why I brought you all here and why I have Fudge here now.”

“How dare you do this to me, I am the Minister of Magic. I will have you thrown in Azkaban for this you bloody bastard.” Fudge raged from his chair.

“Really Fudge, and which Azkaban is that? The one that is guarded by your loyal supporters who instead of housing Death Eaters are now incarcerating your political opponents and people you consider a danger to your power? Or would it be the Azkaban that is at this very moment being repopulated with Dementors who are expelling your supporters and releasing those wrongfully imprisoned? You didn’t know about that? Well I guess it’s only natural that I know considering it was I who ordered them there. You see Fudge, as long as you are in power I will hold control over Azkaban and its guards.”

“How did you get them back from Voldemort?” Snape asked clearly impressed.

“Simple really, I just offered them what Fudge here would not give them and what Voldemort could not spare.”

“Dark wizards.”

“That’s right professor. Out of the six attacks today I’ve captured nearly four hundred. All in all the Dementors are very excited.”

“Wait you said five attacks but earlier you said there were eight.”

“So I lied. There are Death Eaters within the ministry that would have known that the story of the poison was a fabrication if I said Voldemort did it.”

“Then what was that potion you gave minister Fudge?” “Hermione asked rather timidly.

“That is the exotic method of extracting information I mentioned earlier. Well let’s get down to business shall we. Ok Fudge how much do you weigh?”

“Two seventeen, what kind of questi.....AHHHH” Fudge let out an ear piercing scream that shocked all present with its intensity. “Two fifty seven, two fifty seven.” He repeated over and over for nearly two minutes as he gasped for breath and tears streamed down his face.

“Now Fudge, by now I expect even you know what this potion does so you now know the penalty for lying. The bigger the lie the more the pain. And if you are thinking about it there will be no comfort in passing out. You will not faint while under its influence. Now here’s a good question one I’m dying to know the answer to. Why is Lucius Malfoy out of prison?” Fudge paled considerable as he thought of the pain if he did not answer.

“Hurry up fudge you have three, two, one.”

“He was a spy working for the Ministry against AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.”

“Damn that must have been a big lie to last that long.” Harry observed.

“He told me that he could help me discredit Harry Potter in the press to make him out as some new dark lord.”

“Now isn’t that interesting. Now why would you want to discredit him?”

“Because after it came out that ‘you know who’ was really back my support was cut in half and continued to drop, where as Potter’s and Dumbledore’s was through the roof. As long as Potter was out of the way and kept quiet my position was cemented.”

“Now did he really kill his relatives?”

“No, it would have been impossible for him to. Before he left school for the year he broke his wand in front of the entire student body after he berated them for turning

their backs on him for a third time.”

“Ok that is all I want from you. Now lets get to some other business.” With that he lowered his hood to reveal who he truly was. A collective gasp went through the hall.

“Yes, yes, it’s really me and I must say I am very disappointed in all of you.” Harry Said much like a father trying to punish his little girl for stealing cookies.

“Mr. Potter I would like to apologize for the way you have been treated and extend to you the full courtesies of the ministry and offer reparations in the amount of.”

“Don’t even think of finishing that god damn sentence.” Harry bellowed. “So, that is how you run things at the Ministry is it. You make a mistake, practically ruin someone’s life so you try to buy them off and act like it never happened, as if you did nothing wrong. What did I say before I left, what did I tell you? You all know what I said because it was in the Prophet two days later. And yet first day of summer it happens again. You people are so keen when it comes to rumors and gossip but are not worth shit when it comes to something that really counts.”

“But Harry the ministry was tell the people..”

“The people are nothing but fucking sheep.” He bit out with distaste. “Someone points them in one direction, they go without thinking twice. Someone else comes along and points them in another direction, and they go without question. You people have gotten so god damn lazy you have to have people tell you what to do, what to say, what to think. And you accept it without question. You never look at different possibilities. Your arrogance is chocking this society and effecting everyone and everything around you. Many of you are so wrapped up in the purity of your blood that you can’t see passed the end of your fucking nose. You walk around using terms like half-breed and mudblood to make yourself feel superior to those around you.” Harry scanned the hall for a moment the continued.

“Who here is head of the Department Against the Dark Arts?” A skinny little man roughly five foot two spoke up.

“That would be me.”

“Ok can you tell me how many have been killed by Death Eaters in the last two months since the ministry confirmed Voldemort’s return?”

“Well yes, that would be roughly seventy five.”

“Thank you, but that is wrong. There have been exactly four hundred and twenty nine deaths at the hands of Voldemort and his followers. You won’t hear the exact figure in the paper or a press conference because the vast majority were muggles and many if not most of you feel you are superior to them and that their deaths don’t matter.” Harry stopped as he noticed Draco Malfoy snickering over at the Slytherin table. “So Draco do you think you are superior to muggle borns and half bloods?”

“Of coarse Potter, everyone knows that they could not possibly stand up against a

pure blood.”

“Interesting theory Draco, but one that I myself seem to remember disproving when you and your two bookends came at me three months ago. I had no wand and you three had yours drawn. So if that confrontation is any indicator we could theorize that one half-blood is superior to three purebloods, could we not?”

“Now, as for those reparations you mentioned, the only thing I ask is this. We have all department heads here now and since Fudge is clearly not capable of being an effective leader I ask that you choose a new one now. Right now, not later. And that person damn sure better be someone that is ‘willing’ and ‘capable’ of putting everything that is necessary into getting the job done, not just ignoring it. Now I would like to see Mr. Weasley, Mr. Diggery, the four heads of houses, Hagrid, Remus, as well as the students that studied with me last year in the Headmaster’s office. The students should return to their dorms and ladies and gentlemen I leave you to your vote.” With that Harry exited the hall through the side door heading to Dumbledore’s office with the others following close behind.

On the way there everyone was a little nervous about what was going to happen in this meeting as most of the students going had never been included in something that seemed as vital as this. When they reached the stone gargoyle instead of giving the password Harry simply tapped it with his ax and to their astonishment it sprang aside. “I’ll explain inside.” He said simply seeing their surprised expressions. When they all reached the office the students were amazed at all the little gadgets and gizmos that covered the tables that scattered the room. Dumbledore gave a quick flick of his wand and the room expanded to accommodate the sizable group that now occupied it. When all were seated they turned their gazes to Harry but Professor Snape was the first to break the silence. “Potter, am I right in assuming that that ax is..”

“Yes, it is the ax of Salazar Slytherin.”

“But how did you get it? I mean it has been lost for centuries.” Harry took a minute to ponder this question before he answered.

“Ok, before we get to that first we must get to our destination because it will help explain.” Everyone looked utterly confused as Harry made his way to the back of the room and once again used his ax and tapped the wall behind the headmaster’s desk. The wall opened up, just a bit to reveal a hole in the floor not unlike the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. They watched as Harry dropped into the hole as if it were completely commonplace.

“Well I can’t think of anything better to do.”

“Quite right Severus, quite right. This seems to be important so lets not dally.” Responded a very intrigued Professor Dumbledore. With that they both went down the hole. Harry waited at the bottom with a rather amused expression watching the others look around in wonder. The chamber they were now in was a long corridor that seemed to go on for ages. The walls, ceiling, floor, hell everything was made of solid marble. There seemed to be no seams what so ever as if it were dug out from the inside of one massive slab.

“Where is Ron and Ginny?”

“Hermione relax, they are still in Dumbledore’s office trying to figure out if they should follow or not.”

“Why would they do that after all we all came down?”

“Neville if you had been down in the Chamber of Secrets with us you would be a little apprehensive as well.”

“That’s true.” Neville confessed as they waited for Ron and Ginny. And waited. And waited. Finally ten minutes later they came down. First Ginny looking a little flustered then Ron looking a little put out.

“Sorry it took so long, Ron was being an ass.”

“That’s alright Gin, lets go.” When Harry called her ‘Gin’ she did something that Harry had not seen her do in over a year. Well a year for her anyway. She blushed. Harry quickly hid his grin and proceeded down the corridor which was lit brightly by some unknown source of light. Dumbledore, ever the scholar, was trying to piece together how this was achieved. After five minutes of walking they came to a turn and Harry stopped them before they turned the corner.

“Harry why did we stop?” Remus asked curiously.

“Because Mad Eye is already in there and he has been a little more jumpy then usual. It would seem he has adopted himself a new code for himself.” Not really knowing if he wanted to know the answer he asked the question anyway.

“And what would that be?” He mentally slapped himself as a maniacal grin crossed Harry’s face.

“Well he said he got it out of some muggle movie but it fits him rather good. He claims that from now on he is going to ‘shot first, shot last, shot some more, then when everyone is dead try and get in a question or two’.”

“Your right that does suit that lunatic.” Said Snape in his usual deadpan voice. The next second the sound of curses being thrown was heard as they sped past the corner where the group was standing and collided with the wall in front.

“Who’s there, show yourself?.” The voice was old and betrayed paranoia but was powerful and far from panicked.

“God damn it Mad Eye, put that thing away before you take someone’s eye out.”

“Oh, is that you my lord? I am so sorry to have given you a start like that, it was so foolish and clumsy of me. Can you every find it in your merciful heart to forgive me?” Came the reply dripping with sarcasm.

“Alright smart ass don’t over do it.” Was all he said out loud but Ginny could have sworn he mumbled something to the effect of, ‘crazy old bastard’, she couldn’t be sure though as they were now turning the corner into the magnificent hall that resided there.

Chapter Seven: Harry’s Story

As they made the way into the hall beyond the corridor they were once again shocked into silence. They were now standing in a large circular room, easily matching the size of the Great Hall. The ceiling was so far over head that it was out of sight of the human eye. All along the walls were moving painting and tapestries of powerful wizards, witches, kings and of famous battles. Many of which were lost from human memory in the countless grains of the sands of time. Hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room was a massive gold and crystal chandelier over a large round table that was split off into four into four sections. Each section was capable of holding twenty or more people and were separated by a two and a half foot section that was left free to seemingly allow one to enter into the center were they would then be surrounded by all four sections and whoever was seated at them.

Seated at the table was the ever ready Mad Eye Moody, the less than reputable Mundugus Flecher and also a shabby looking man that looked, for lack of a better word, half dead.

“Sirius Black,” Some of the more excitable students yelled, throwing curses his way but none of them made it.

“I would greatly appreciate it if you did not do that again”. Harry said calmly yet there was a hint of a threat in his voice.

“Harry is, is that really Padfoot?” Asked a very confused and hopeful Professor Lupin.

“It sure is Moony. But he is still recovering from his recent decent into hell. But he should be completely recovered in a few hours. He just has one hell of a head ach now.”

“But how is this possible?”

“Now I would just like to tell each of you who do not already know that Sirius here is completely innocent. Now take a seat and we will get started.” Harry walked up to the head of the table and took a seat waiting for the others to follow suit. To one side of him sat Ginny and Luna. One the other sat Neville, Ron and Hermione.

“Now Harry can you explain where you have been the past few months?”

“Indeed I can professor. But according to the time that has past for me I have been gone for just over two years.” There were gasps and disbelieving looks until he continued. “Now I know this will sound rather weird but bear with me.” He took a few steadying breaths before beginning to recount the time he was gone. “When I first arrived home for the summer and I found my aunt and uncle dead I began the same

train of thought that had crippled me in the past. I began blaming myself for their deaths just as I had done when Cedric had died and when we believed Sirius to be dead. But this time I took it one step farther. I was so convinced that if I were gone Voldemort would no longer hurt those I cared about. I justified my actions to be what needed to be done to protect my friends and my 'real' family. But that was only an excuse to take the easy way out like a coward. I took a knife and cut my arms to the point where they were not even recognizable as arms. Just before I passed out from the loss of blood there was this sharp golden light and then all went black. I don't know how long I was out but when I woke with a massive headache I was obviously still alive and my wounds were healed. I was no longer in my uncle's house but rather a large circular room with nothing in it save the bed I had slept on."

"I met a man there, oddly enough his name was Forge. He is a big fan of the twin's work." After surveying their expressions he elaborated. "You see he lives in a different realm that he created to train those he feels worthy of his attention or like in my case there is something that they need to accomplish. He uses a well to look into this world to look for those he intends to train. He was keeping an eye on me when he saw Fred and George hassling Professor Umbridge last year so he went through and watched every prank they had ever played. He was impressed to say the least." Fred and George sat there beaming like five year olds on Christmas. Just the thought of some powerful wizard changing his name in honor of them was enough to put them over the top.

"Well we don't want to let Forge down now do we brother mine?"

"Absolutely not, we will have to double our efforts!" Was the immediate reply from Fred, or was it George.

"Boys absolutely not, you will behave yourselves for once in your lives. Now please continue Harry dear." With that Harry began to tell them what had happened over the course of the two years he spent with Forge.

/Flashback/

It was now two weeks into Harry's training and he still could not grasp wandless magic and was growing increasingly restless with each passing hour. "Forge, can we just move on to something else, I am never going to get the hang of this?" Harry said in exasperation.

"Harry listen to me and listen carefully! You must forget all you have been taught about magic. You are starting over again and that is never easy. Your ancestors created wands as a crutch, a tool to help their children learn and understand magic. It was meant to help but all it did was handicap them. When they grew older they preferred to stick with the wands instead of learning all over again. Over time the art of magic without wands died out. No one believed anyone could do it anymore. Thus their handicap was passed on to you. Our world is standing on a crutch that inhibits the magic inside of us. The wand was never meant to be a tool. We ourselves were meant to be the tool for the flow of our magic. The same thing is now happening in the muggle world. Machines and computers dominate their lives to the point of catastrophe. Every day some hard working man or woman loses their job to be

replaced by yet another machine. Machines and computers are their crutch just as wands are ours. But what would happen if suddenly those computers and machines stopped working. The world would be in panic. Every day, knowledge of how to build, create, and to even survive is dying out and they may never get it back. They call it progress. I believe they are crippling their society, don't you?

Harry what would happen if the trees we get the wood for wands disappear or the creatures that give us the core were to be wiped from this earth? Many of them are on their way in that very direction. No more wands."

"Forge don't you think you are being just a touch over dramatic?"

"No, I don't think so Harry. You see like I said a wand is a crutch. A man on crutches is weak. Get rid of the crutch and he becomes much stronger." As Harry sat pondering the meaning of all that he was told, Forge sat quietly watching him intently. He could sense that Harry's mind was awash of conflicting thoughts and beliefs. But soon he also saw acceptance.

"Alright Harry lets call it a night shall we, it has been a long day for both of us?" Harry stood and was half way to the door when he stopped.

"No, I would like to keep going for awhile if that is okay." Forge nodded with an indifferent look about him but inside he was screaming in triumph.

"Okay Harry take a seat." Forge was acting as he was indifferent to the continuation of their session but Harry felt the rise of emotion in the room when he said he would like to keep going which made him grin slightly but he quickly hid it. "So you know what to do just concentrate on the fire and try to pull the warmth in from all around." Harry began to concentrate on the warmth in the air and all things around and tried to project it all towards the fire place. For a few moments nothing happened but then suddenly the fire erupted a blinding white so hot it began melting the stones of the hearth. Forge quickly stepped forward and extinguished the fire with a shocked look on his face. "Wow! That was amazing; I never saw anything like that out of someone on their first try."

"I think I'm going to go to bed now." Said a very weary and exhausted Harry as he got off the couch only to fall back onto it again. "Then again I'm comfortable right here." And with that he fell asleep. Forge could feel the excitement building inside himself as he literally skipped out of the room leaving Harry to sleep.

The following morning Forge went to check on Harry only to find him up and training looking as if he had just run a marathon. "Does wandless magic always tire you out like this?" He asked while catching his breath.

"It does at first. But as you train you will be able to go longer periods of time while using it, as you would using your wand. Did you just now get started?"

"No, I've been up for about three hours but I've only been training for two." Forge quickly spat his tea all over the room as he looked at Harry with astonishment.

“You have been using wandless magic for two hours?” Forge was completely shocked and it was beginning to make Harry uncomfortable.

“Yeah, why?” He asked sort of cautiously.

“Why, why? Because that kind of an exertion should have killed you an hour and forty five minutes ago. When one is first learning wandless magic it is a terrible stain on the mind as well as the body. You passed out last night after just lighting a fire. That should have happened again after two or three spells yet you have been going for two hours.” Forge ranted for nearly three hours about how impossible and dangerous it was and that Harry should be dead when he finally stopped and collapsed into his chair and told Harry to go get him a drink.

Harry, having nothing better to do at that precise time got up to go him something to drink. Considering his mentor’s rather delicate condition Harry decided to just bring him a bottle of seventeenth century fire whiskey. Upon entering with the bottle he found Forge still mumbling to himself about impossibilities. After showing the bottle to Forge, Harry opened it.

“Do you want me to let it breath?” Forge looked at him as if he had just said the stupidest thing he had ever heard.

“Harry it hasn’t breathed in over three centuries, it’s dead let’s just drink it.”

As Forge drank Harry went back to practicing as Forge observed, taking another drink every time Harry had once again pushed passed the limits of a normal human’s capacity to endure mental and physical strain by continuing his wandless training without dying much less passing out. Thus it went for nearly another six hours until Harry had finally collapsed in a heap, breathing hard for a few moments before composing himself and making his way to his room leaving Forge where he had passed out hours before with an empty bottle lying in his outstretched hand.

For another three weeks Harry’s training proceeded much the same way with him honing his wandless skills while Forge drank, unable to understand how Harry could be proceeding so fast. Then one morning Forge woke Harry very early for a little change of pace.

“Okay Harry we are going to start the physical aspect of your training now since you have clearly gotten control of your magic. So let’s go to one of the other training rooms shall we?” Harry followed Forge as he was led into one of the larger training courtyards still trying to wipe the sleep out of his eyes. “Alright Harry start running.”

“Excuse me?”

“Start running. I want you to run for one full hour. No walking, no stopping, so I suggest you pace yourself. Go on. I’ll stop you after an hour.” And so he ran, and ran, and ran.

“Harry that’s enough. Come on it’s time for lunch.” That stopped Harry right in his tracks.

“Lunch! You told me you’d stop me after an hour!”

“Well after forty five minutes you looked as if you were having fun and I could not find it in my heart to stop you.” Forge replied in an amused tone. Harry glared at him in disbelief but soon began to laugh.

“Time sure flies doesn’t it! I don’t know why but after a while I felt as if I could run forever and I didn’t really want to stop. I mean my heart is pounding, my muscles are burning but I feel good.” He said with a wide grin on his face.

“You know Harry, you are one sick bastard. You just ran four seven straight hours without even slowing your pace.”

“Well try four hour training sections with my former Quidditch captain. The man was insane.” Forge shot Harry a glare that clearly said that he did not believe that that was the reason behind Harry’s sudden boost in resilience which confused Harry a little.

A few hours later found Harry back in the training courtyard getting smacked around by Forge, whose irritation seemed to be growing with each passing minute.

“Come on Harry, you need to focus.”

“I am focusing. Every time you knock me on my ass I start focusing on how much I want to stay down there.” Harry stood and took up his position opposite Forge and not looking forward to what was coming. Almost like lightning Forge had ducked down and swept Harry’s feet right out from under him, sending him hard to the ground. Shaking his head Forge walked up beside him and placed a foot on his chest.

“Harry you have to at least try, okay. That was the third time in a row I had you down before you even realized I was moving.” He was going to continue but wasn’t given the chance as Harry suddenly reached to his chest and grabbed his foot. Before he even realized what had happened Harry lifted his leg towards his head and drove his heel into Forge’s abdomen. As he hit the ground Harry jerked his leg, flipping him over onto his stomach and quickly twisting his ankle. “Ah, shit. Ok you can let me up now.”

“What do you think I was doing those ten minutes? I was watching your movements and reflexes. Which I must say are pretty fast. But you had one thing going against you!”

“And what would that be?” Forge grumbled as he got up and dusted himself off.

“Simple! You tried to move as quickly as you could. Like a big man putting all his weight behind his movements, it is a great disadvantage.”

“Come on Harry, I’m supposed to be instructing you not the other way around.” Forge whined although he had a little glint in his eye that clearly showed that he was impressed.

The next few months moved along at much the same pace with Harry learning quickly with various weapons and healing techniques.

/END FLASHBACK/

Harry suddenly stopped speaking and looked upon the faces of all those around him listening and watching him with supreme interest. Almost as if they were watching those events play out right there in front of them.

“I will be back in a few moments it would seem they are done with their vote. Mr. Weasley, Mr. Diggory will you please come with me.” And with that the three left the hall with all, including the two accompanying him, wondering how he could possibly know what was going on in the Great Hall at the moment. When the three came to the spot where they had entered Mr. Weasley and Mr. Diggory looked around wondering how they were going to get back up to the top. Suddenly the two jumped back when they heard a shrill cry escape Harry’s lips. Before they could ask what was going on, three phoenixes appeared, seemingly out of no where; landing on their shoulders and carried them back up the hole into the headmaster’s office.

“Harry I don’t mean to sound rude, but, what the hell just happened?” Asked a very surprised Mr. Weasley. His question also seemed to echo in the eyes of Mr. Diggory hadn’t seemed to get his voice back yet.

“I called the phoenixes to lift us out of the hall. It is the only way out.” Replied Harry as he found a piece of parchment and began to write what appeared to be a letter. When a knock on the door was heard Harry simply waved his hand and the door opened revealing the same ministry official that had tried to offer him money as an apology.

“You’ve come to a decision then.” It was obviously not a question by his tone.

“Yes we have! Considering all angles, we all came with only one possible candidate and that was Arthur Weasley.”

“Me! Why would they choose me?” Arthur was completely baffled by this most interesting change of events.

“Well that is rather simple actually. You see you were one of the only ministers that had expressed your beliefs and stuck by them even after your support within the Ministry was gone and Fudge began to fire and threaten those that supported Professor Dumbledore. Everyone else was backing down to Fudge but you so we figured you would be the ideal man to replace him.”

“Oh, well thank you for letting me know.”

“Mrs. Stanton right?” When she nodded Harry handed her the latter he had just been writing. “Will you please have this delivered to Azkaban for me.”

“That I can do Mr. Potter. Mr. Diggory, Minister Weasley, good evening.”

“Oh and what is to happen to our esteemed and ex-minister?”

“Well since he has openly confessed there is no need for a trial so he along with Mr. Malfoy will be taken to Azkaban first thing in the morning.” With that she walked out the door with Arthur still gaping at the closed door. After shaking himself off he managed to ask about the letter which he had been wanting to do since he first started writing it after they had exited the hall with the aid of the phoenixes.

“It was a letter to the Dementors, giving you full control over Azkaban. Normally if I had thought of it I would probably have sent a phoenix to deliver it but they have the same effect on Dementors that they themselves have on normal human beings. I didn’t waste my time with them just to have them get disgruntled that quickly. And I sure as hell wasn’t going to send Hedwig. She’s already pissed at me for disappearing for a few months I wasn’t about to send her there. Well we should be getting back.” And with that he turned around and jumped back down the hole.

/IN THE HALL/

After Harry had left there were a few moments when nobody spoke, but trust Hermione to try and learn all she could.

“Professor, do you know what this room is?”

“Alas Mrs. Granger I have only speculation. But if my thoughts are correct we are now sitting in the Hall of the Phoenix. I can’t be sure of course because like the Chamber of Secrets, until recently, has not been opened since the time of the four founders and has thus grown into a myth. Although I must say that I had searched for it on many occasions hoping to find it. I had helped to prove a fair number of myths as fact in my time and I was hoping this to be one of them.”

Remus, who was sitting next to Sirius was still dumfounded that his best friend was alive. “Padfoot where have you been?” Sirius looked up at him with almost fear in his eyes. “Hell! That is the best word to describe it. It was worse than Azkaban one hundred times over. Harry said something about it being called the Lost Souls Room. Where exercised spirits are sent. So cold, so very, very cold.” At that point he lowered his gaze and began mumbling to himself and the room went back to being quiet and they remained that way until Harry returned.

/BACK to HARRY/

“So when did you start talking to Phoenixes Harry?” asked Mr. Weasley.

“Oh, about a year and a half ago. Something very strange, and very painful I might add, happened and when I woke I could understand them.”

“Oh, and what was that?”

“I had a burning day! That may sound confusing but I will explain it all when we get back to the others.” The two looked at Harry as if he were insane but continued

walking nonetheless. As they re-entered the hall all eyes were on them in a sort of unspoken question. The three however ignored it and took their seats.

“Well? Who is the new minister?” Professor McGonagal’s question was asked by several others until they got their answer.

“Um, that would be me.” It was clear that Mr. Weasley was still just a bit shocked by that turn of events.

“Oh the shame! First my brothers lower themselves by becoming prefects and head boy now my own father is Minister of Magic.” George piped up clearly amused.

“How will we ever be able to hold our heads high?” Add an equally amused Fred.

“That’s assuming you still have your heads. Now be quiet.” Snapped Mrs. Weasley as she looked on at her husband with admiration. After everyone had recovered from their shock and bouts of laughter from the Weasley’s bantering they turned back to Harry waiting for the rest of his story.

“Now after I had been there for several months, myself and Forge were watching through the well as you had a meeting here the night the Weasleys were attacked. And I must say that Mr. Granger’s assessment of the situation is probably fairly accurate. If I manage to kill Voldemort people won’t care if I live or die doing it, just as long as Tom is gone. Like he said, to most people I am nothing but a weapon. But I must say that I don’t really give a fuck what those people think. They have shown their true colors and their true feelings toward me. They do not care if I live or die just as long as I get the job done. The only people whose opinions I really care about are sitting right here in this room.” At that confession many people were shocked that they would be included in this select group, most of all was Snape.

“And why would my opinion matter to you?” He asked curiously.

“Because, over all you may not like me and I may not like you, but contrary to your probable beliefs I can certainly relate too many of those things I saw in your pensive last year. I also have a great deal of respect for you for your dealings with the order as well as being one of the best potions masters in the world. Over all I don’t think you are all that bad of a guy.” Harry finished to shocked silence. Everyone was thinking roughly the same thing. ‘Did Harry Potter just complement Snape’. Dumbledore just watched on with amusement the usual twinkle in his eye.

“Now after we had finished watching that rather interesting meeting I went back to my training for awhile then went to bed.” Harry gave a small shudder as he said this as though he were reliving a bad memory. “Well I was awoken early in the morning by a very strong tingling sensation in my legs that was growing more and more intense. As I stood up the sensation turned to burning and started moving up my body very rapidly. After a few moments my legs burst into flames and I passed out in a matter of seconds that felt like an eternity.” There were many gasps within the hall as he talked. A few of the women including Hermione, Ginny and Mrs. Weasley began to cry.

“When I woke up the next day I was a little shaky, well maybe a lot shaky, but other than that I was fine. No burns, no scars, nothing. I got up and realized that I was not in my room. I was walking out of the room when I came face to face with an old man.”

“Who was it?” Hermione asked very interested. Harry answered with one word.

“Merlin.”

/FLASHBACK/

“Harry sit down lets have a little chat.” He did as he was told and just stared at the old man for a few minutes. “Ok now before you asked, yes I am really Merlin. I have been waiting for quite some time to meet you.”

“And why would you want to meet me?” Harry was clearly dumfounded that someone like Merlin would want to speak to him.

“Well that would be because you are the first wizard since myself to be infused with the phoenix.”

“What are you talking about. What does mean infused.” He was obviously very confused. The thought that he was actually speaking to Merlin seemed to have overridden the thought of ‘Merlin is still alive’.

“You see Harry once in every great while a wizard or witch is born whose spirit is one with that of the phoenix. We are known as the Phoenix Lords. Within your very skin you hold the power of the phoenix as well as all of their abilities. But with this power comes the drawbacks as well. Can I assume that you did not sleep particularly well last night?” He asked with a knowing smile on his face.

“Oh shit! That is what that was? I thought that was some screwed up dream.” He sounded almost panicked.

“That was your first burning. Unfortunately you will have to go through it every six months or so. But unlike the phoenix you are reborn in the same physical condition that you were at to begin with, with the exception of wounds of course.”

Harry was now pacing the room trying to take all of this in. “Okay so every six months I’m going to burst into flames. Is that what you are telling me?”

“Are you really this slow? I tell you of the burning days then you ask me the question that that statement answers. By the way look down.” Harry gave him a weird sort of look then looked down and almost fell on his face.

“Ah hell, how do I get down?” He was now standing two feet off the ground. “Just calm down and think about coming down.”

“What kind of stupid..”

“Just do it Harry.”

Harry did as he was told and soon he was back on solid ground. “What the hell just happened?”

“Really Harry there is no reason to shout. Now like I told you before you have the powers and abilities of a phoenix.” Harry thought that over for a few moments before he suddenly got a huge grin plastered on his face.

“So I can fly now.” Merlin thought that over before he gave his answer.

“Generally. You can also do self levitation on an enormous scale while even carrying many times your own body weight. Now Harry there is something else that we have to discuss and that is about the heirs of the four founders and of course myself as well as another.”

/END FLASHBACK/

Harry stopped his story looking as if there was a raging battle playing out inside of him. After a few minutes some at the table started thinking that something may be wrong.

“Harry are you ok?” Ginny’s voice entered into his mind and had a calming effect on him.

“Yeah Gin, I’m fine. Now, I was told that I have to get the heirs of the founders, Merlin and another who I won’t name yet. Now before I inform you of who the heirs are I have to explain how one becomes the heir. With Merlin it is rather simple it goes by blood lines. One is endowed with his essence and holds it until their death when it moves on to the last in his line. While they grow they will also be the holder of his essence but also of those who came before. When they pass on the cycle repeats it’s self.”

“Now that is where the Heirs are different. They chose to pass their powers and abilities on to those that they choose. The founders also have the ability to remove such powers if the heir is not as they expected. Don’t ask me how I don’t particularly understand that myself.” He added at their confused looks at his last statement, however Snape was looking at him with his piercing gaze clearly thinking that Harry was full of shit.

“Now on to business!” With that he rose from his chair and walked to a painting of Rowena Ravenclaw. He placed his hand on a stone to the side of the painting and it moved aside with a bow. The others stretched their necks to try to see what was behind the painting but could not see passed Harry. When he turned around they were a little surprised to see he was caring a sword as well as something in a small black box. Everyone watched him with expectation. “Alright Luna will you please come and claim your sword and ring.” Everyone was clearly shocked by this, everyone that is except Luna who nothing ever really seemed phased. She walked up to Harry and smiled her thanks.

“You know Luna one of these days I am going to manage to shock you and that will be the first sign of the apocalypse.” Luna of course just had that same serene look on her face that almost makes you want to shake her and replied with a simple maybe. With that Harry turned and walked to the opposite wall toward the portrait of Helga Hufflepuff. Once again the painting bowed to Harry before sliding out of the way. The occupants of the room waited with baited breath to find out who the next heir was.

“Alright Ginny you would look lovely in gold so why don’t you come and get your ring.” Harry said with a sly smile as Ginny blushed for the second time that evening. Ginny got her ring and sword after giving Harry a bone crushing hug that Molly Weasley herself would be proud of. The twins were about to say something, no doubt about the shame of their sister being a founders heir, but were cut off by their mother before they could even begin.

“Now as Professor Snape has pointed out I am carrying Slytherin’s battle ax. That is because out of a freak twist of fate I became his heir the night Voldemort attacked my family. When the killing curse rebounded onto him Slytherin transferred his essence to me assuming I must be of great power. He learned to late that he could not corrupt me and tried to remove it but could not due to extra power that was preventing it. That power was coming from that fact that I was chosen to be Godric Gryffindor’s heir at birth as well being a phoenix lord. I also have the honor of being the last of Merlin’s line.”

Everyone was clearly awed at these statements and stared, open mouthed, as Harry walked to the portrait of Merlin himself. The picture of the greatest wizard who ever lived bowed to Harry and swung open. Harry removed a simple staff that had a driftwood look about it. After removing the staff he turned around and walked up to Professor Dumbledore with intense affection in his eyes. To say he was stunned was an understatement. After accepting the staff he could no longer hold his question in.

“Harry, how is this possible, you said you were the last of his line?” After looking over the room, everyone clearly wanting to know the answer as well he turned back to the Headmaster. Harry could feel a lump growing in his throat but resolved to say this looking in his Headmaster’s eyes.

“Thirty nine years ago your daughter’s house was attacked by dark wizards and her and her family disappeared but sadly was later found dead. All except their sixth month old daughter who was left at a muggle friend’s residence the night before. Those muggles were Glen and Karen Evens who were asked to keep her safe for as long as they could. They raised Lily Evens as their own to keep her safe.” He was barely able to finish with tears stinging his eyes. As the meaning of his words sank in everyone was surprisingly quiet and looking away as if giving them a private moment.

Dumbledore, who was finally coming out of his shock, eyes began to water as he pulled Harry into a tight hug. They stayed like that for several moments until they finally composed themselves and stepped back smiling. Although they were not watching, many others in the hall also had tears in their eyes and smiles on their faces. Harry stepped back and wiped the tears from his face and got back down to business.

“Okay. Now last of all we have this. I believe some of you will recognize it.” He said

as he removed the broadsword from his back. He walked between the sections of the table to the center of the room where a massive stone rested on the floor.

“Harry is that.”

“Yes Hermione it is.” And with that he slid the blade of the sword into the stone where it fit as if made to be there. Which Hermione reminded herself that it was.

“Neville if you please?” Harry said looking directly at his friend.

“What, me are you insane?” Harry stood there as if thinking about the question.

“Yes well I probably am. Now please come up here and take your sword.”

“Harry you must be making a mistake I couldn’t even lift that thing much less....”

“Neville don’t start doubting yourself again. You were doing very well at the end of last year, don’t start taking steps backwards.” Harry’s confidence in him seemed to do the trick, because he stood and walked confidently towards Harry. When Harry motioned for him to, Neville placed his hand on the hilt of the massive sword and gave a sharp jerk. With an almost singing tone Excalibur was once again freed from the stone by its rightful owner and master.

“Holy shit! Oh sorry professors.” Neville add sheepishly.

“Quite alright Mr. Longbottom.” Replied Professor McGonagall in aw.

Harry gave a small chuckle. “Well this certainly has been an interesting evening but before we go I’m sure there are a few of you who would like to know how the recently deceased Sirius Black is with us here tonight.” When he said this Sirius suddenly looked up. Upon seeing Harry standing in front of him he quickly vaulted the table and wrapped him in a bone crushing hug. Muttering thank you over and over. After calming him down and guiding him back to his seat he began to explain what happened.

“Okay those few of us that were at the Ministry the night it was attacked will remember Sirius dueling with his cousin when he was hit with a curse and fell threw an archway that was covered with a veil. Everyone stopped me from going after him saying he was dead. Well the reason behind this is because everyone that has gone through has not come back. The Department of mysteries has no idea what this archway is but I am about to tell you.”

“It’s called the Lost Souls Room. In actuality it is a prison. A prison for spirits that have been exercised. It’s purpose is rather like Azkaban. Spirits are sent there for all eternity as a punishment. Of course spirits don’t feel things the same as we do so the effects are amplified. So you can imagine the effect this would have on a living person. Sirius has been out of there for twelve hours and he is still feeling the effects. Now the reason you cannot get out is simple for human and spirit alike. You see the Dementors were created to be the foulest creatures to walk the planet, to guard the foulest of our kind. The same applies with this archway. It was created by only god

knows who to punish the foulest of the spirit world. A living person, perfectly healthy walks through that arch and in seconds he will feel as if he has spent half his life in Azkaban. He won't be able to think rationally much less make an attempt to leave. So you can imagine the effect on Padfoot here, who already spent twelve years with the Dementors for a crime he did not commit."

After taking all this in Remus asked a very interesting question. "Harry how did you manage to get him out?" At this Harry gave a wide grin that made even the twins nervous.

"Well you see Remus, everyone is always open to a better deal." At their confused looks he continued. "You see those few hundred Death Eaters I captured and left for the Aurors to find were only two thirds of those that were actually captured. They were turned over to the Dementors as agreed while I used the other third as bargaining chips. As I said, everyone is always open to a better offer. There are very few exceptions to that rule. And I hope everyone in this room is an exception."

When Harry was finished retelling the events of Sirius' "rescue" he walked toward the portrait of Gryffindor. When the painting opened Harry removed Gryffindor's ring and placed it on his finger. He then walked to Slytherin's painting and withdrew the ring inside. He then placed it on his other hand. Once again Snape seemed to be the only one noticing discrepancies in Harry's tale of the Heirs as he saw a great deal of pride on Harry's face when he put on the ring of Salazar Slytherin. He resolved to ask 'Potter' about it another time.

"Alright now you three must keep your swords with you at all times. There will be times this year that you will need them. Also only one of the heirs can open this hall and you must have your sword or your ring with you to enter. The swords are also perfectly capable of being stolen and used before you realize it is gone and call it back to you, but while you have it at your side no one will be able to remove it from your possession until you drew it. Now I don't know about you but I have had a very long day and would like to get some sleep so shall we go?"

There were nods all round as they rose and began to exit the hall. When they were all gathered at the end of the hall all but Mr. Weasley and Mr. Diggory looked around in confusion. When Harry reached the others and saw the looks of confusion on their faces. "Oh, hold on." At that Harry once again released a long cry and immediately dozens of phoenixes suddenly appeared around them carrying those present up to the surface.

"Okay Harry, now how are we going to get back up now that they are all gone?" Harry looked sharply to his right and noticed that other than himself Ginny was the only one left in the hall.

"Oh, well I guess I will just take you up with me." He said while flashing her a winning grin that made her face flush bright. He walked up to her and wrapped her in a hug. "Alright Gin hold on tight." And with that they lifted off the ground and began to rise back to the surface. When they reached the Headmaster's office they did not seem to realize it as they were staring into each others eyes. After more than a few fairly obvious clearing throats they snapped out of it and jumped back from each other

both blushing furiously.

“Okay everyone I would greatly appreciate it if you did not mention any of this to anyone. Now I must speak to the Headmaster alone.” Everyone taking this as their dismissal began filing out and returning to their own homes or dorms. After everyone had left Harry walked over to Fawks’s perch and looked at him almost accusingly.

/You set that up, didn’t you/. Fawks gazed back at him innocently.

/I do not know what you mean My Lord. There were simply not enough of us present so we did the only logical thing and left Miss Weasley with you. You were perfectly capable of handling the situation were you not/? Harry could do nothing but laugh at his side stepping the issue and turned back to the Professor. He had an interesting proposal for him and of course also wanted to speak to him on a personal level.

Chapter Eight: Meeting With a Snake

While walking back to the common room Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Neville were discussing all that had happened. “Ginny what was with you and Harry, I thought you were over your crush on him?” Ginny looked rather shocked at this and stumbled over her words.

“I am Hermione I just, well it was. Oh never mind I could not explain it.” But she clearly indicated to Hermione that she would explain later.

Suddenly Ron stopped right in the middle of the corridor. “Um would any of you happen to know the password?” They all looked at each other a little worried.

“Ginny what’s wrong?” She had just jumped as if someone had walked up behind her and whispered in her hear. After looking around for a moment she turned back to the others who were wearing the same concerned expressions.

“Oh nothing, it must have been the wind. But I think the password is Fluffy rules. I heard one of the older prefects mention it earlier.” She quickly lied.

“What! Did they let Hagrid pick the password or something?” Ron exclaimed. Ginny then turned to her brother.

“Why would you say that? Who is Fluffy?”

“One of Hagrid’s pets.” Ron answered as if reliving a bad memory.

“Oh yes the three headed dog.” Ginny remembered as they approached the fat lady. “Password.” “Fluffy rules.” And with that the portrait opened and they climbed into the common room to be bombarded with questions from their house mates.

“What happened?”, “Where has he been?”, and “Why does he look much older?” were the three most frequent asked questions. After a few minutes they began to get really annoyed.

“Alright, enough!” Everyone turned towards Ginny just a little shocked that she had just shouted like that. When she had everyone’s undivided attention she continued. “We cannot answer any of your questions at this time. If you don’t like it, tough shit. Go get your answers from him. We were told not to discuss it and we wont.” And with that she went to sit in front of the fire and was soon joined by Ron, Hermione and Neville.

“Ginny please don’t do that again. I just had a horrible flashback of mum.” After saying this Ron and the others laughed for a bit and talked about their classes that would be starting tomorrow. Naturally Ron was bored out of his mind during this discussion and did a fare amount of rolling his eyes. An hour had passed since they had arrived back in the common room when Ron asked the question that everyone else seemed, to him at least, to not care about.

“What do you think Harry and Dumbledore are talking about?” He looked around to find the other three looking at him as if he were insane. “What?” He asked defensive.

“Ron, Professor Dumbledore just found out Harry is his Great Grandson from his Granddaughter that he thought had died almost forty years ago. What do you think they are talking about?” Ron thought about it and realized that Hermione was probably right and went back to their discussion. After a little while of talking Ron and Neville decided to go to bed, when in actuality they were going to wait for Harry up in their dorm.

“Alright, we are going to talk some more.” Hermione replied in an off hand manner. When the two boys were in their dorm she quickly turned back to Ginny. “So tell me what is going on.” Ginny looked at her for a few minutes before answering.

“Well I told you that in my third year I got over my crush, and that was true. Well I moved on after I finally realized my feelings were not returned.” Hermione sat there thinking. She had no idea what Ginny was talking about. The look she gave her what seemed to be the look of someone without a brain in their head. “Hermione I realized that I loved him. Not some stupid schoolgirl crush but the real thing. I put it behind me and locked it away. Then tonight with just a few little things he did all those feelings came back up again.” At this point Ginny was almost hysterical, pacing back and forth in front of the fire, breathing heavily and looking as if she would burst into tears at any moment. Hermione immediately went to comfort her friend.

“Ginny calm down, it will be all right.” At those words Ginny burst into tears and she collapsed into the armchair behind her. “Ginny you put this all behind you once you can do it again.” Hermione tried to sooth her friend but it did not seem to be helping.

“Hermione you don’t get it do you? With a dozen little things he did tonight I got that hope in me again that he would notice me. When we came out of the chamber and came into Dumbledore’s office he was just staring into my eyes like we were the only people within ten miles.” When she finished she nearly completely broke down. Hermione started to speak several times but stopped each time not really knowing what to say. To say she was confused was an extreme understatement.

“Um, Ginny if you think Harry might finally be noticing you why are you crying.”

“Hermione think about it! I had a crush on Harry my first three years here and since then I’ve been in love with him. I have managed to put a lid on my feelings for him for over a year now and with just a few smiles and a look in the eye he tore my walls down again. I mean what if I am just imagining it or what if he really likes me?”

“And that’s a bad thing? Harry liking you I mean.” Hermione looked kind of apprehensive while asking this question afraid that it would cause her to break down again.

“If he likes me what the hell am I supposed to do?” suddenly Hermione’s face grew bright and a wide grin spread across her face.

“Play hard to get.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Think Ginny! If Harry really likes you then he would probably let you know fairly soon, so make a little game of it.” The next moment Ginny had a grin to rival the twins which made Hermione a little nervous.

“So what are you going to do?”

“Sorry Hermione but you will just have to wait and see. Now I am going to bed since it seems Harry won’t be back for a while and we have three hours till breakfast.” Hermione quickly looked at her watch and saw that Ginny was Right.

“Damn it, how long were we in that meeting? Well lets go up.” At the same moment that the girls were going up to their dorms there was another important meeting taking place and it wasn’t as positive as theirs.

There they stood. Encircling their master with their robes billowing in the wind and silver masks reflecting the moon light, the Death Eaters waited for their master to begin. They waited for only two of their number to arrive. Their fear of Lord Voldemort was clearly evident as they waited for their punishment for the failures of the day.

“Serverus, how good of you to join us. Now maybe you can shed some light on this very, embarrassing, situation.” The tone he spoke clearly held a warning which made some in the Death Eater ranks smirk a bit due to not believing that he was faithful.

“That I can master! It appears that the man responsible……” He was immediately cut off as Voldemort spoke up.

“Man! Man! Are you telling me that one man stopped ALL of my new recruits? A very step forward.” A tall man on Snape’s right stepped forward a little reluctantly.

“Yes master.” There was a hitch in his voice and it seemed as if he was about to cry.

“Now Avery, when you returned from St. Petersburg you informed me that someone must have leaked the information of the attack because you and your recruits were surrounded by a swarm of Aurors. Now was that the truth.” There was a small sob from behind the silver mask before he spoke.

“No master but...” That was all he got out before he was hit full in the chest with a burst of green light and slumped to the ground.

“Now Severus please continue.” He said with a bit of an edge.

“Well master, in a meeting held earlier today in the Headmaster’s office we learned of the attacks shortly after the attack on Diagon Alley. We were told simply that they were all stopped by the same man. He carried an axe, was proficient in wandless magic and very agile.”

“Then just before the feast this same man walked into the Great Hall and spoke with the headmaster for a moment then went outside to stop an attack on the school. The reports we received about his abilities were down played quite a bit. It was a massacre plain and simple.” Snape then went on to tell them of the meeting with the ministry officials, Fudge’s and Malfoy’s arrest and finally the identity of the mystery man. To say Voldemort was enraged was a gross understatement.

“The rest I will tell only you Master!” Snape had finished with a look of pure disgust on his face as though what he had to say turned his stomach which greatly intrigued Voldemort. To everyone’s surprise and relief he quickly dismissed them without punishing anyone else.

“So what is this information you have for me?” Snape made show of looking around; making sure no one else was listening and putting up a silencing shield.

“After the meeting in the Great Hall where the students and ministry were present, Potter brought the four heads of house and his filthy little friends to the Headmaster’s office. He told us all the training he was put through physically and magically. The only thing of interest there is the wandless magic but he has yet to say how that was developed. We were then told he had to bring together the heirs of the founders and Merlin.” He conveniently left King Aurthur’s heir out of the discussion.

“And who are these heirs?” His ‘master’ prompted.

“Hufflepuff’s heir is that little redheaded bitch Virginia Weasley, Ravenclaw’s is some stupid little girl named Luna Lovegood. Dumbledore is the heir of Merlin. Now these three had there abilities unlocked by Potter during this meeting. Potter of coarse is Gryffindor’s heir.” Snape then began to look extremely nervous and fidgeted about.

“What else is there Severus? You know better than to hide things from me.”

“Well, you see master, well; um, he also claims that he is the heir of Salazar Slytherin.”

“HE WHAT? What are you talking about, I am Slytherin’s heir not that pint sized little bastard. And how does he explain that?”

“Well he claims that when your curse failed to kill him Salazar’s essence, not his power, was transferred to him so that it could try to corrupt him and use his power for Salazar’s bidding. He claims that he now also holds Slytherin’s power. He also wields Salazar’s axe and wears his signet ring.” Snape was really starting to get nervous and he had a hard time not letting it show.

“How did he get his hands on those? They have been missing for centuries.” Voldemort was fuming and he was almost radiating accidental magic.

“I don’t know master there were many things he simply would not talk about.”

“Alright, I want you to keep your eyes and ears open. I need more information.” Snape nodded then gave a rather peculiar offer.

“If you would like Master I could try and thin the herd, so to speak, a good poison in the right spot could do a lot of damage?” Voldemort seemed intrigued by this suggestion but then quickly dismissed the idea.

“No, if people begin turning up dead for no apparent reason even that muggle loving Dumbledore would start to question your loyalty and you are proving to be far to valuable.”

“Yes master.” Snape responded with slight disappointment in his voice although he was breathing a mental sigh of relief.

“You did good Severus. You have proven your loyalty to me on many occasions. You are dismissed.”

“As you command.” And with that Snape vanished only to reappear in the forbidden forest silently cursing Harry Potter.

“Now professor that wasn’t very nice, your performance was masterful. So what’s got you so up tight?” Snape ground his teeth before answering.

“The fact that I have you in my head at the moment is enough to set anyone on edge. You are absolutely insane. What if he had taken me up on that offer?”

“He wouldn’t have done that. You are too valuable to him at the moment and he is not going to risk that for the chance to take out a few students. Now I will be leaving you, Fawks and I have business to attend to.”

“Is that what you call it?” Snape asked rather sarcastically.

“Well what would you call it. Now I have to go I will see you in the morning I have a proposition for you.”

“My god he is insane, there is no other word for it.” Snape continued talking to

himself all the way towards his quarters giving serious doubt to those patrolling the halls about the potion master's state of mind.

Chapter Nine: Respect Given, Respect Received

The next morning found four very blurry eyed Gryfindors on their way to the Great Hall for breakfast, wishing for more sleep weather it be two hours or two minutes.

"So I'm guessing Harry didn't come back to the tower last night?" It was a few moments before Ron even realized anyone was speaking much less to him.

"What? Oh, no, not that I know of. I haven't seen him since we left Dumbledore's office."

"Well well well. If it isn't the weasels, mudblood and the fat lump!" The Gryfindors turned to see none other than Draco Malfoy and his bully boys. Draco was wearing his customary smirk while Crabbe and Goyle attempted to look menacing. "So where's Potty? Did he go and leave you all alone?" Crabbe and Goyle stood behind Malfoy giggling like two very large school girls.

"Malfoy, for some one who got thrown around last night like some little bug, you certainly do talk an awful lot of trash." Malfoy's face flushed at this comment and was quick to reply.

"Potter will get what is coming to him soon enough and I plan to be there. And when that happens the Dark Lord will take care of you to as well as all mudbloods and muggle lovers." And with that he stalked off with his two bodyguards close behind him.

"He is becoming more and more mentally unstable every day. If he thinks he can take Harry he should seriously consider a trip to St. Mungo's." Ron had changed a bit over the last six months or so and could now control his anger fairly well but this did not stop him from worrying about what Malfoy may be up to.

The four entered the hall and took their seats and the Gryfindor table and waited for Dumbledore to make his announcements all the while looking around for Harry. "So where do you think Harry is?"

"I don't know Ginny. Knowing him he could be anywhere." Answered Hermione. Just then Professor Dumbledore stood to give his announcements and the hall went quiet.

"Now, due to extenuating circumstances I was unable to give the start of term announcements last night so I will give them now. Please remember that the forbidden forest is just that, forbidden. Due to certain actions that were taken last year it is even more so now. I would also like to welcome back Professor Lupin who has been good enough to come back this year to once again teach defense against the dark arts. There will also be another course on defense that can be taken but this will be strictly

voluntary with a few exceptions. Now to explain this new course I turn the floor over to Mr. Potter.” Just then the door off to the side of the hall opened and Harry came striding out. He looked just as menacing as he did the night before and even though they now knew who he was they were still terrified of him. Maybe even more so. When he reached the head table he turned to address the student body.

“Now this course will go into more depth than the traditional defense class. I will train you to take care of yourselves during the most perilous of times.”

“I can take care of myself very well without your help Potter.” Malfoy piped up.

“You couldn’t take care of a wet dream. Now keep your mouth shut.” Harry retorted. “Now, I will train you in hand to hand combat and weapons training. As Professor Dumbledore has said this is voluntary with a few exceptions. Those exceptions are those who were at the meeting last night MUST attend, professors included. These classes will be held in the castle armory off the lower dungeon every other weeknight after dinner until I see fit to dismiss you. Think real hard about whether or not to take this course because if you show up it will become a mandatory course for you. No amount of sniveling, whining or pressing what little influence you think you have will get you out of it. Those that choose to will remain in the hall after dinner tomorrow night.” And with that he walked to the Gryffindor table with the entire hall, teachers included, gawking at him. As Harry sat down the hall burst into excited and nervous chatter.

“How are you doing Gin?” Harry asked with a bright smile.

“I’m doing alright Harry, how about yourself?” She answered returning his grin and winked.

‘Um, interesting!’ He mused but was pulled out of his thoughts by the question he knew was coming.

“Wow Harry your teaching your own class?” Hermione was clearly impressed by this.

“It would seem so.” Was his simple reply as he started dishing out some food onto his plate.

“To bad Malfoy won’t be there. I would love to see him get put in his place on a routine basis.”

“Don’t worry Ron he’ll be there.” At his friends confused look he elaborated. “Do you think he would actually turn down the opportunity to see me make a fool out of myself? No Ron he will definitely be there and then try everything he can think of to get back out again.” After explaining he gave his friends a very sinister grin that made them almost feel sorry for Malfoy. Almost.

“Ok so what class do we have first Hermione?” She looked at Harry rather shocked. “What, I got something hanging out of my nose?”

“I thought you were a teacher now!”

“Hermione I teach a class! I am not a professor and I haven’t graduated. Besides there is always something more to learn.” Hermione obviously greatly approved of this comment as she looked over her time table. As if she didn’t already have it memorized.

“We have double potions first.” Hermione reported with a sigh and they headed down to the dungeons for the start of class. They arrived to the classroom ten minutes before class started only to find Malfoy waiting for them.

“So Potty went and became a teacher. Just for fun I think I will join this class just to see you crash and burn. Then maybe I will put you in place myself.”

“Keep dreaming shit ball.” Was all he said as he entered the classroom leaving a very upset Slytherin behind him. “See Ron, what did I tell you?”

“I think he is going to make some very bad decisions this year. And the consequences could prove to be rather entertaining.”

“You two can not use this as an opportunity to pick on another student even if it is Malfoy. And besides Ron you are a prefect you can’t go around harassing people.”

“Hermione I’m not doing anything, its Harry’s class he can do what ever he wants. Besides he gave a rather strong warning to those thinking about joining. If he decides to show up it is his own fault what happens.”

“And I am not going to use this as an opportunity to ‘pick on’ Malfoy as you say. I’m going to use it as an opportunity to make an example of him if he gives me reason to.” Harry informed her with a very sharp edge to his voice that clearly showed that he was not going to be messing around with this, and disturbances by Malfoy or anyone for that matter would be severely punished. As they were sitting down at their usual table Snape came out of his office looking slightly disheveled.

“Potter, join me in my office for a moment!” By the tone of his voice it was clearly not a request which made the Slytherins rather smug. Harry followed the professor into his office and sat down as he closed the door and put up a silencing charm. “Now Potter I would greatly appreciate it if you would stay out of my mind from now on.”

“Well you have to admit professor that it worked out wonderfully. Now I am assuming that you had another reason for wanting my company.”

“Yes well I was just wondering why you lied about certain matters last night.” Snape had fixed Harry with a piercing glare trying to find some indications of his thoughts but was disgusted to find none.

“What do you mean sir?”

“Potter you and I both know that the heirs of the founders are determined by

blood lines also the fact that Slytherin's ax and ring would not permit you to know of their whereabouts unless Slytherin himself approved of you. By implication that changes what we know about Slytherin since they did not reveal themselves to Voldemort. So why the subterfuge?" The potions master was obviously very interested in this and would not get on with the lesson until he got what he wanted.

"Well that was certainly direct! But to answer your question, my telling the truth would have brought up so many questions that many of them aren't ready to hear the answers to. Plus time was running short last night and I did not have the time for extended explanations and arguments."

"Alright, well explain it to me now!" Snape prompted. Harry thought about this for a moment before answering.

"Tonight I am going into the forest to get some ingredients for some very old and complicated potions. Some are even illegal but I don't really have a choice, I need them. You can come with me as if I am serving a detention. I will tell you then." He informed his teacher.

"You want me to assist you? Is this some kind of joke?" The idea certainly didn't appeal to the potions master. Harry far from looking offended simply reached into his robes and removed a small vial.

"This is one of the potions I need to brew. It is rather complicated and I thought I could use your help." Snape's eyes immediately lit up upon seeing the half full vial of purple fluid.

"You want my help in brewing an illegal potion. I could be thrown into Azkaban just for writing it down."

"Well it is a good thing I have it memorized then, no need to write it down."

"Be here at nine and don't be late!" Snape answered quickly. He obviously wanted to know how to brew this potion and was curious as to the others as well. Harry walked out of the office looking very pissed off.

"Harry what's wrong?" Hermione was a bit worried by this turn of events.

"He gave me detention already. First class of the year now I have to spend tonight trudging through the forest with him." Harry bit out, just loud enough for Malfoy to hear.

"What for? You haven't done anything. Not yet anyway!" Ron looked almost as pissed as Harry did.

"Well he thought it was a fitting punishment for my conversation with Malfoy outside, plus he thought it presumptuous of me to 'require' a professor to attend my class. Apparently Dumbledore informed the other professors that they are to attend. He had some rather choice words for me."

“Well Potty went and got yourself into trouble already. You really should learn to control yourself, you might get yourself into more trouble that even you can't talk your way out of.” Malfoy just smirked as Harry ignored him and went to sit back down.

The class proceeded as always with Snape intimidating the Gryfindors and praising the Slytherins. In the end the only thing different about the lesson was that Neville had made his potion right and was not intimidated by Snape. It would seem that the back bone he had developed last year was still holding strong.

After a long potions lesson and an even longer history of magic lesson the trio and Neville made their way to the Great Hall for lunch. Unconsciously he dropped into the seat right next to Ginny.

“Oh Harry, you wouldn't by any chance know how I got the password to the common room last would you?” She whispered to him so no one else would think she was crazy.

“Why Gin what every do you mean?” Harry replied with a wide grin on his face that told a different story.

“You know damn well what I mean. You scared the hell out of me. I thought I was going crazy for a few minutes until I remembered that phoenixes have telepathic abilities.” Ginny retorted with mock anger. Harry hung his head as if he were ashamed of himself. At this ‘over’ display of regret and shame Ginny simply slapped his shoulder and they both began laughing. Ron who was not able to hear what was said looked a little shocked.

“Hermione is it just me or is my sister and best friend flirting with each other?”

“It would seem so. Oh Harry where were you last night? We tried to wait up for you but you never came back.”

“Ah, well Hermione I spent a very hot night in the Hall of the Phoenix.” He answered absently.

“Oh sorry, um well, does it hurt?” It wasn't until the question left her lips that Hermione realized what a stupid question that was. The other four looked at her as if she were insane.

“Hermione, he bursts into flames. I don't know about you but that doesn't sound very comfortable to me.” Neville answered as he looked at her disbelieving that someone so smart could ask a question so stupid. Hermione just bit her lip then the other looked at themselves and burst into laughter. After a moment Hermione joined them and the rest of the Gryfindors looked at them as if they were crazy. Some even tried to inch away from them. Throughout their lunch Harry and Ginny continued to lightly flirt with each other, much to the others amusement.

“So Ron you seem to be taking this turn of events rather well.” Hermione observed.

“Yeah well it is a little uncomfortable but I must admit that I feel better about this than with her dating that Ravenclaw last year.”

The rest of the day past relatively slowly and dinner passed much the same way as lunch with the interaction between Harry and Ginny. After an hour of sitting in the common room talking and answering questions with the rest of Gryffindor house Harry made his way out of the portrait hole and headed down to the dungeons and Snape’s office.

“Come in Potter we might as well get started.” Harry walked into the office to see Professor Snape getting his things in order. Snape gave him a quick look over and realized that he had come completely unprepared. “For someone who needs to collect potion ingredients you pack a little light.” He observed critically. Harry just smirked and withdrew a small box from his pocket, about the size of a matchbox and placed it on the floor. With a wave of his hand it grew into a set of doors that were roughly the size of the doors leading into the Great Hall.

“I keep my stores with me at all times. Some of the things I have are too valuable and deadly to leave lying around.”

“May I?” It was a simple question but conveyed a lot of meaning. Namely that he would do anything to get into that room. As answer Harry simply opened the door. He realized that for Snape to take him seriously and do what ‘had’ to be done while in the forest he had to ‘show’ him that no one took their potions more seriously than him. Well perhaps Snape did but he was a fanatic when it came to the “subtle science” as he called it back in Harry’s first year.

As he stepped through the door his jaw hit the floor. This was not what he expected at all. Instead of a store room as he expected, it was more of a lab in its self. The chamber, for lack of a better word, was about half the size of the Great Hall. Along all four walls were cases upon cases of specimens. There were tables throughout, several with large cauldrons bubbling away. Snape made his way over to the table nearest him to see if he recognized the potion. He did not.

“Potter what have you got here? I don’t recognize it!”

“I would be greatly surprised if you did. That potion is considered lost. It hasn’t been brewed in over a millennium. What it does is reverse the effects of damage to the brain. Over a period of six months the patient will slowly regain their mental stability. I have had it going for over a year now and it still has eighty four days.” Harry explained.

“How did you manage to brew it if it is lost?” Snape was really confused and it showed. Harry walked to a nearby table and retrieved a large book bound in black leather and handed it to his Professor.

“This book contains nearly every potion of the ancient world. The vast majority is considered lost. This book is the only record in existence that shows that many of these potions were ever created.” This answer however did not relieve the confusion

the professor was feeling.

“But where did this book come from?”

“I wrote it! You see professor when I was training I was able to come back to this world at any point in time. I went back several times and compiled that book as well as a several others of spells and curses. I even have a special cabinet filled with potions ingredients that can no longer be found.”

“So you can travel through time any time you feel like it?” He asked skeptically.

“No, not any more. I have finished my training so I am back here for good. Well it is almost ten o’clock we had better get started.” Harry lied smoothly and the two walked out of the room.

Chapter Ten: Explanations and Greetings From Aragog

Harry and Professor Snape made their way into the Forbidden Forest at an easy pace watching carefully where they stepped and kept their distance from one ‘exotic’ looking tree in particular that pulls you in with it’s vines then stores you in it’s trunk while it slowly digests you. A very nasty way to die don’t you think?

After twenty minutes Harry waved his hand casually. “Alright professor I just put up an illusionary shield. If anyone is out here watching us all they will see is me serving my detention with you making smart ass comments every few minutes. So what do you want to know?” Snape was taken back for a moment due to a near half hour of silence but quickly recovered.

“Alright Potter, why did you lie at the meeting last night?” Snape looked indifferent but the curiosity was building up to the point of making him burst.

“Ok! Where to start, where to start?” Harry rolled everything around in his head for a few minutes until he answered. “Ok, well everyone knows the circumstances behind Salazar Slytherin’s departure from the school. What they don’t know is that most of the story is complete bullshit. And the rest was embellished quite a bit.”

“You see he came from a long line of dark wizards and he was the proverbial ‘bad egg’ of the family. Oh don’t get me wrong, he was obsessed with the dark arts but for the knowledge only not for any practical use. He did also believe that muggle born witches and wizards should not be allowed at Hogwarts. Not for any hatred for them but for his belief that some of the parents of those muggle borns would one day betray them. Which ‘has’ happened on a number of occasions. After the first three of these ‘occasions’ Salazar left the school.”

“Most people if told this would call me crazy, again, and remind me of the Chamber of Secrets. What they don’t know is that the other three heirs built their own chambers as well. The fact that there is, well, was a basilisk in his is obvious in the fact that the basilisk is the king of the serpents and the serpent is Slytherin’s mascot. The other three also kept one of their mascots as pets, well not pets, more like

companions.”

“The stories of Slytherin’s cruelty and murderous nature were fabricated many years after he was gone by his family, even his children, who were angry that the traitor of their family was very well known. So they made him out to be the worst of them. It seems that every generation has more to add to the stories.”

“Now several hundred years ago there was a descendent of his who was also the ‘bad egg’ of the family. She later fell in love and married Gryffindor’s heir. I’m descended from this line while Voldemort is descended from her sister’s. The reason I gave for becoming Slytherin’s heir was fairly accurate. When Voldemort tried to kill me I became Slytherin’s heir because he was now much more dead than alive and the power would do him no good so Slytherin’s power was free to move on. Now the reason I left all this out is that for the time being I don’t think they can handle a change in a thousand years of dogma.” Harry finished and looked over at Professor Snape who was very quiet and had a thoughtful look on his face.

“I see you weren’t ready to hear that either.” Harry chuckled. It was another few minutes before Snape came out of his daze.

“Where exactly are we going Potter? I don’t recognize this part of the forest.”

“Well I wouldn’t think so. No one comes out here and if they do they usually don’t come back. As for where we are going, we are going to the center of the forest. There is a clearing with a tree in the center, a very large tree with some interesting properties.” Harry said with a grin playing about his lips.

“And why do they not come back?” Snape had asked the question even though he was not sure he wanted to know the answer.

“Acromantula.” Was the only reply.

“Come now Potter, there are no Acromantula in Great Britain. Hasn’t been for centuries.” Snape seemed immensely confident in this belief.

“Well Professor I’m awfully glad you told me that.” His tone was just screaming sarcasm. “I will make a point of informing Aragog the next time I see him. I’m sure he’ll find it fascinating that he is not supposed to be here.” When Harry finished he suddenly turned his head to both sides as if trying to find something.

“Potter, how dare you take that tone with...” but that was all he got out.

“Silence! Something is coming.” Snape strained his ears and began to hear a disturbing clicking sound.

“What is that?” Snape asked nervously.

“Well professor I guess you get to inform Aragog, in person, that he should not be here!”

“You mean that that noise is?”

“Yes that is the Acromantula. They will not kill us, they will take us to Aragog first and he will decide weather or not we live or die. Actually this is best; I have to speak to him anyway.”

“You are awfully calm about this!” As soon as Snape said these words both him and Harry were swept off their feet and lifted into the air. Snape looked up to see two large pinchers which were covered in something that looked like drool wrapped around one of his legs as well as many very long legs moving at great speed.

After ten minutes of being carried upside down even Harry was getting disoriented from the blood flow to his head. Soon however they were dropped onto the hard ground below and started to recover. When they stood and looked around they realized that they were completely surrounded by the giant spiders. Snape was looking extremely nervous where as Harry was perfectly calm.

“You have nothing to fear from us!” Came a rasping voice from a large dome like nest. Emerging from the nest was the largest of the spiders. His size and milky white sightless eyes identified him as the leader of this colony. Aragog!

“You, friend of Hagrid, have destroyed the great evil and are therefore always welcome among us spiders. You have been brought here so that I may warn you. This forest is no longer safe for your kind. More and more dark creatures have been moving in to occupy this forest. We do not believe that it is natural. We are certain that one of your kind is manipulating them. They are ravaging our home and driving many other creatures out and attacking those that will not leave. As of now we along with the Centaurs and Unicorns are the only ones remaining. The leader of these beasts is most foul. He carries the head of a man on the shoulders and body of a lion. Beware of him and his underlings. That is all. I wish you luck, friend of Hagrid.” And with that he retreated back into his nest leaving Harry and Snape to depart. Which they did without hesitation.

“What did he mean by ‘the great evil’?” Snape asked curiously.

“Oh that was the basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets.”

“Well why didn’t he just say that?”

“Because a basilisk is their only natural enemy. All spiders are afraid of them and they will not speak of them openly. Aragog would not even tell Hagrid what it was though he asked him many times. It was Aragog that basically told me where the entrance to the chamber was.” Harry explained.

“You said you needed to talk to him anyway, so why didn’t you take the opportunity?”

“I got the information I wanted without even having to ask.” Harry said looking a little relieved.

“And what information might that be?”

“I simply wanted to know what was going on in the forest. Although it is a lot worse than I would have thought. One Manticore is bad enough but you can almost guaranty that he will have at least three or four Chimaeras with him. Plus what ever else Voldemort has sent in here. Later I’m going to have to find the Centaurs and see if I can get any information from them before they try to kill me.” Snape was about to reply to this comment when Harry spoke up with shock.

“Holy shit!” Snape’s gaze shot forward and his eyes met a most horrible sight. All throughout the clearing were dozens of Centaurs laying on the ground bleeding from obvious battle wounds. There were just as many tending to the injured and dying. Harry rushed to the Centaur he knew as Ronan to find out what happened. When he reached him he saw that he was tending to the one known as Magorian who had a deep slash across his chest.

“Ronan? Ronan, snap out of it!” He lifted his head and met the eyes of Harry Potter. His face did not hold the same sense of superiority and pride as it did just a few short months ago. “Ronan what happened?” At first it looked as if he did not comprehend the question but then he seemed to snap out of his daze.

“It was a massacre; there is no other way to describe it. We did not even have time to get ready before they fell on us.”

“Who? Come on Ronan, who did this?” He turned his head back towards Harry with a frightened look in his eyes.

“It was a Manticore and a few Chimaeras. They just charged in while we were reading the heavens and everything turned to madness.” After saying this much Ronan turned back to Magorian and began cleaning his wounds and mumbling to himself as if his mind had just snapped. Harry got up and walked back to professor Snape who was still standing just along the tree line with a chalk white face. Centaurs are known to be fierce warriors and the idea that only a small number of opponents had been able inflicted this much damage on them was terrifying to say the least.

“Professor I am going to transport you back to the school. Tell Dumbledore what has happened and send Firenze here immediately.” Before he had time to protest Harry waved his hand and Snape was gone. After sending Snape back to the school Harry quickly put up protection wards all over the clearing. No one besides those with Snape Dumbledore and Firenze would be able to enter.

“Bane come over here!” Harry yelled to the Centaur that was standing guard.

“What are you doing here human? You don’t belong here.” Bane said with disdain in his voice.

“I’m here to help you, so unless you want to lose half of your herd I suggest you cooperate. Now do you know how to brew healing potions?”

“Of course!” His attitude had changed in the blink of an eye and was ready to do

anything that was needed to save his friends. At Bane's answer Harry removed a box from his pocket and it enlarged to a very large set of doors.

"Alright let's go." Harry opened the doors and quickly walked in with Bane on his heels. With a wave of his hand several fires ignited and cauldrons began to bubble. Harry and Bane began gathering ingredients and preparing them. Soon Snape returned with the headmaster and Firenze and the three began helping with the potions.

"I'll be right back!" Harry was gone before anyone could ask any questions so they went back to their work. Outside Harry had made his way to the tree in the center of the clearing and lifted himself to the top most branches which were a good two hundred and fifty feet off the ground. While up there he picked several small red flowers that were outlined with blue. After gathering around two dozen he lowered himself back to the ground and made his way back to his 'lab'.

While preparing these flowers for his potion the other four came over to observe as their potions simmered. All of them, even Snape, watched in awe as he skillfully prepared the ingredients and brewed his potion. "Harry, may we know what this potion is called?" Asked the aged headmaster.

"Moktar's potion." He answered simply

"That is a dark arts potion!" The professor said shocked.

"Professor just because it is banned does not make it dark. There are many that are banned simply because if they come into common use it would remove the need for certain professions. Such as this one. If people began brewing it we would no longer need many of the healers that we now have because it can heal a vast majority of injuries. Basically they will deem something as the dark arts if it will put someone out of work." He explained as he took his cauldron off the fire and poured it in to several vials and then touched his eye and dropped a tear into each one.

"Alright let's get to work. Since I do not have much of this I will only give it to the most critical of the injured." With that they moved throughout the clearing dispensing healing potions and performing charms as well as giving them potions for the pain. An hour later all had received one potion or another but Harry's certainly worked the best, on several occasions bringing one of the patients back to full health that just hours before was next to death.

The three wizards remained in the clearing over night keeping watch over the recovering Centaurs to make sure there was no relapse. Late into the night Harry slipped away with the full intention of finding the Manticore and his underlings and dispensing some punishment. It was not hard to follow them due to the rather sloppy trail. They obviously did not expect to be followed. Of course only someone completely insane would follow that group.

Harry changed into his 'natural' form, which of course is the phoenix, and followed the trail, silently gliding above the trees. He was thinking how liberating it was to fly on your own power and not have to rely on a broom. He was brought out of these thoughts however when he came across the dark creatures, who were now

surrounding a large herd of unicorns. As Harry got closer he saw something rather shocking, to him anyway. The only thing between the unicorns and the Manticore and Chimaeras was Hagrid's brother Grawp.

Grawp was at the moment holding the Manticore at bay but that would not be the case for long. Harry flew in low and quietly landed behind the Manticore and changed back, removing his ax from his back. He looked ahead of him to where the creatures stood twenty feet before him. He was about to advance on them when he stopped to think.

'What the hell am I doing? Nobody has survived an encounter with one Chimaera much less four. Then you've got the Manticore who's no slouch either. Oh well I've got nothing better to do.' Harry thought as he started off at his slow pace once again. The sounds coming from the frightened unicorns and the grunting from Grawp served good to cover the sound of his approach.

The Chimaeras were just as ugly as he thought. They were roughly the same size as him with the body of a goat, the head of a lion and the tail of a dragon. They are extremely vicious and blood thirsty.

The Manticore was much larger though. The lion's body that it had was much larger than any lion you are likely to see. Its human head was rather refined looking with long black hair and sharp features. Its tail resembled that of a scorpion with a sting that will kill a human instantly. And its skin will repel most charms and curses. All these facts were going through Harry's mind as he made his approach.

"Arry" came a questioning voice. Harry looked up and saw the confused look on Grawp's face.

"Oh shit!" Was all Harry said as the Manticore and the Chimaeras turned to see him coming up from behind them. Harry gripped his ax tightly in preparation for the attack. Two of chimaeras rushed forward to meet Harry as the other two attacked Grawp. The speed of the creatures was amazing but that was also a disadvantage which they quickly learned. When they were within five feet of him, Harry side stepped and duct to the left. At their speed they could not stop in time and Harry spun out catching one in the midsection with his ax. The Chimaera had a very shocked look on his feline face as it slumped to the ground in a bloody heap.

This action enraged the other and he went on the attack. With swift motions with his whip like tail he pushed Harry back several yards before Harry struck again. Harry's ax lashed out and severed his attacker's tail. While his opponent was distracted, with precision he buried his weapon into the Chimaera's chest revealing that they actually had two hearts.

"Now why the hell did that catch my mind right now?" He mused as he straightened himself up. As he surveyed his surrounding he realized that Grawp had defeated the two that went for him and the Manticore stood between them looking furious. He looked back and forth between the two and decided to try his luck with Grawp, which surprised Harry just a little. As he started his charge Harry himself was already in motion. With a powerful swing he released Slytherin's ax and it began spinning,

speeding toward the massive creature. Before he had reached half a dozen steps the massive blade slammed into his right shoulder and nearly cut clean down to his waist. The Manticore collapsed to the ground with a startled cry, his legs still twitching long after he died.

Harry walked up to him and retrieved his ax from the stiff body of the creature.

“Are you ok Grawp?” He asked trying to be polite though he was very nervous. But suddenly Harry enveloped into an enormous hug that he was pretty sure had cracked a few ribs.

“Arry ‘elp Grawp. ‘Elp Grawp ‘elp Hagar’s friends.” Hagrid’s ‘little brother cried as he continued to squeeze Harry.

“Don’t mention it.” He gasped out as he was released from the hug. He stood rubbing his ribs for a moment until he felt a nudge from behind him. He turned around quickly to find a unicorn staring back at him. “Are you and your herd alright?” He asked. The unicorn was shocked to say the least to be addressed by a human in their manner of speech but she quickly recovered.

/You are strange! You are not like the other man things we have come in contact with. You have about you great power but also great compassion were as the others have only ambition. I will trust you./ When she finished she did something that shocked Harry. She bowed.

/Please don’t do that. I do not mean to offend you but I do not want anyone, not the man things or any other creature to feel inferior to me!/ He explained. With these words the look in the unicorn’s eyes had changed as if she found what she had been looking for. /So are you all alright?/ He asked again.

/We are fine. Those strange creatures surrounded us but the huge man thing over there came and kept them away. He is even larger than the kind men thing with the fuzzy face./ Harry could not hold in his laugh at this comment.

/Yes the man thing with the fuzzy face is called Hagrid, that is his brother Grawp./ After a few more minutes talking with the herd leader, who’s name was Annabel, she scampered over to Grawp and nudged him as well. He turned and looked down at the beautiful creature before him. He bent down with a toothy grin and patted the unicorn on the head.

“Orsy ok?” After that the unicorn nodded and pranced around Grawp. Harry stayed for a few more minutes before he returned to the clearing to see how the Centaurs were doing.

When he arrived he found most of the injured had recovered fully and were up and about. The Centaurs with the most grievous wounds were lying on the ground sleeping while Harry’s potion did its work. He walked into his ‘lab to find Professor Dumbledore and Snape hunched over Harry’s book of potions. They were so immersed in its contents that they did not notice Harry enter or even sit down right next to them.

“Oh, that’s an e not an a!” Harry pointed out when the two professors got into an argument over what was required to make one of the more complex potions in Harry’s collection. The sudden addition of a new voice into their conversation nearly scared the wits out of them.

“Potter where have you been?” Snape asked as he tried to catch his breath again.

“Well I went to make sure something like his did not happen again. And it won’t.” Both Professors were in shock by this statement. After all no one in history had survived and encounter with a Chimaera and there was four of them. And a Manticore is just as bad.

“What! You killed four Chimaeras and a Manticore?” Snape asked disbelieving.

“No, I killed two Chimaeras and a Manticore. The other two were handled by Hagrid’s little brother Grawp.” That really got their attention.

“Hagrid has a brother? Living in the forbidden forest? And he killed two Chimaeras?” Snape asked all three questions really fast giving no time to answer when they were first asked.

“Yes to all three. I followed their trail for several miles before I came up on them. They were surrounding a herd of unicorns and Grawp was standing in front of the unicorns attempting to hold them back. I came up from behind them. Two went for me while the other two chimaeras went for Grawp. They all died rather quickly. After that the Manticore was not that much trouble. It ended very fast. Now what exactly are you looking for?” The change in subject caught the two older men by surprise but they were more than willing to finally get an answer to their debate.

“Well Harry we were trying to determine the use of this potion. But we were unable to come up with a definite answer because some of the components are unknown to us.” Dumbledore explained while giving his great grandson a warm smile.

“Well like most of the potions in this book it does not have a name. It is for werewolves actually. What it does is strengthen a man’s mind during the full moon when he changes. Over the period of four cycles of the moon the wolf within him gets weaker to the point where the man will be in complete control throughout his transformation until the point when he no longer changes. They will still have the enhanced strength and senses of a werewolf but other than that they are completely normal human beings. The reason you did not recognize some of the ingredients is because many of them are now extinct, the only place you can find them now is here in my store room.”

“You have a cure for Lycanthropy?” Both men asked in unison.

“Yes, but there is a hitch. For it to work the man has to have a good heart so that knocks quite a few out of the running, but even with that it gives us a great opportunity to help some at least.” Harry said confidently.

“That is true. When were you planning to brew this potion?” Dumbledore asked him

with a knowing smile playing on his lips.

“I was planning on starting next month. It is already too late to have it ready for the next full moon. I am going to check on the Centaurs once more then go inform Aragog of the recently deceased dark creatures before I head back to the school for a few hours sleep before class starts. So if you don’t mind I need to put my door away.” Harry ushered them out shrank the door and put it in his pocket. Harry turned back toward the Headmaster and saw four Centaurs approaching them. Harry recognized them as Ronan, Bane and Magorian and they were accompanied by Firenze.

“Harry Potter, we are in your debt. We must thank you for the assistance and compassion you have shown our herd.” Announced Magorian who seemed to be a bit confused. “If I may ask, why was it that you worked so hard to save us?”

“Well contrary to what many humans, and centaurs, believe I think we have much more in common then they are willing to admit. There are many wizards that believe that we are better than muggles, goblins, house elves and Centaurs as well as many other living creatures. They use this arrogance primarily to make themselves feel better about themselves and justify the way that they treat them. From what I have witnessed many among the centaurs also use arrogance to build pride in themselves. If I had just turned around and ignored what had happened and left you to die what would that show of my character.” Everyone there had a thoughtful even shameful look about them. “Now I must collect some more of that wonderful flower and go see a spider.” He turned and headed back to the tree in the center of the clearing leaving six very thoughtful faces behind him.

Chapter Eleven: A Parents Betrayal

Harry was on his way back to the castle after speaking with Aragog, who was the leader of a colony of giant sized spiders call Acromantulas. The conversation had been more productive then he had thought it would be in the fact that Aragog had insisted upon helping Harry in his fight against Voldemort. The spiders were shocked to say the least when they had learned of the attack on the centaurs and the near attack on the unicorns. They were relieved and grateful for the ‘departure’ of the attackers.

He was turning this over in his head when he heard something coming from up ahead of him. Harry was preparing for a fight until he realized that it was a pair of centaurs. He lowered his guard and made his way to them as they approached him. They stood there for a moment no one saying anything until Bane broke the uncomfortable silence.

“Harry Potter, as we said to you earlier tonight, we are in your debt. And as such we shall help in anyway possible in your up coming struggle.”

“I thank you but I do not want you or anyone else to feel obligated to help. As for your debt, consider my assistance tonight as payment of my debt to Firenze for saving my life in my first year. Now we are even. If you wish, you may help but know that you are under no obligation to do so.” When Harry finished the two looked a little shocked. After a few moments they composed themselves and Magorian made his reply.

“It is not strictly out of debt that we would help you, for we will be helping our kind as well, but out of necessity and desire. We now believe that centaurs and all other creatures including humans should become united in friendship. If not then this evil that plagues our world will continue to gain strength until there is none left who can stop it. We hope that one day there will no longer be the arrogance that has kept our kinds at odds with each other for so long. And we want to be among those that bring about that day.” He finished very confidently and Harry knew he spoke the truth.

Harry spoke with Bane and Magorian for some time and when he finally made it back to the castle it was already five thirty in the morning. Seeing that there was no point in going to sleep now he headed down to the kitchens instead! He had not see Dobby in some time so he thought he would go see how he was doing. He reached the painting of the bowl of fruit, tickled the pear and went inside and was almost instantly bowled over by a very excited house elf.

“Harry Potter sir, Harry Potter comes to see Dobby!” He looked up to Harry with his big tennis ball shaped eyes.

“Yes Dobby, I need to speak to you about something. It’s sort of a prank but more like teasing really since it is very small.” He had Dobby’s complete attention while explained.

“Yes sir, Dobby can do that for Harry Potter. It will be ready for breakfast.” The house elf replied confidently. After speaking to Dobby about how he has been and of other things Harry made his way to the Great Hall for breakfast. Naturally it being only six thirty he was the first in to the hall. He sat quietly for awhile just thinking until more students began to arrive. The first being four rather unhappy Gryfindors. Ron and Neville took the seats directly across from him as Hermione and Ginny flanked him on both sides. Suddenly they started!

“Where have you been? Once again we waited up most of the night and you never came back.” Hermione started!

“We were worried sick!”

“We thought something had happened to you!”

“Anything could have happened out there!”

Hermione and Ginny continued to scold Harry for five more minutes, switching back and forth between the two of them, before Harry had enough.

“Enough!” Harry’s voice roared like thunder but no one else in the hall seemed to hear it. Hermione looking shocked, turned to look at him only to find him eating so how could he have said anything. “Yes Hermione you have a little voice in your head. Now please stop shouting, I already have a headache.” Harry finished as he put his mug of pumpkin juice down. Hermione just sat there looking at him with wide eyes and her mouth gaping open. Ginny was laughing at Hermione’s reaction while Ron and Neville sat there looking confused.

“You can do telepathy?” Hermione asked after she had composed herself enough for her studious nature to make a return.

“Yes Hermione I can. Now as for where I was, I was in the forest all night. I was not actually serving a detention. Snape and I went into the forest to gather some potion ingredients and got side tracked. A few times.” Seeing their confused faces he continued. “I will explain it all tonight. While I was waiting for you to get up I was speaking with Professor Dumbledore, I seem to have shocked him to the point where he fell out of his bed, but anyway tonight after my first class there is going to be a meeting in the Hall of the Phoenix with all of us from the DA and the members of the Order of the Phoenix.” Harry spoke all of this in their minds to make sure they were not over heard. As an after thought he added something else. “By the way Ron, Aragog sends his best!” He smiled as Ron paled considerably at the message from the giant spider.

“You, um, you saw him?” He asked with a catch in his voice.

“Twice actually. I also saw Grawp, I think they are both going to be a big help.”

“Well aren’t you optimistic this morning!” Ginny commented with a small grin. After receiving a smile in return Ginny turned back to her breakfast but it seemed her breakfast had something else in mind. She had turned to see her boiled egg jump roping with her bacon; her toast had folded its self into kites that were being flown by an apple. Her pumpkin juice had lifted out of her goblet and formed into two Quidditch players. One obviously Ginny and the other looked like Cho Chang. The ‘Ginny juice’ made a spectacular dive and snatched the snitch out from in front of the ‘Cho juice’. Ginny began laughing when she saw ‘Cho’ land and throw her broom down crying. This got everyone else’s attention and this brought on fits of laughter from nearly all those present.

“Well Harry if you are done can I have my breakfast back I am rather hungry!”

“Maybe you should have eaten more last night!” At this she simply stuck her tongue out at him which he returned.

“So what do you think your chances are at getting the cup this year?” When Harry said this everyone looked at him, shock showing quite clearly on their faces.

“What you mean, your not coming back to the team? Come on Harry we need you.” Ron pleaded.

“Ron, I played one game last year. The rest were played by you, Ginny and the others and you won the cup. Ginny is the seeker now! She has more than earned that position and I am not going to take it from her. All of the old team is gone and it is time for a new one. Besides I have plenty of things I will have to do while you are at practice. I have this new class I’m instructing plus if you remember I torched my broom last year.” Harry said all this with a tone of finality to it but still they would not let it drop.

“Well Harry you will have to get a new broom any way incase something happens, so why not.” Asked Ginny.

“Gin you won the cup last year, not me. Plus you will probably make an excellent team captain.” That comment really got her attention. But the rest he let only Ginny hear. “Besides if something happens I won’t need a broom!” She gave him a puzzled look and quietly asked him why. He gave her a long look as if searching for something before replying. “I will show you later, but only you I’m not sure the others could handle it right now.” She was really confused now and very curious. They had all finished their breakfast rather quickly after that and left for their first classes. Ginny was going to defense while Harry, Ron, Hermione, And Neville went to transfiguration.

As they walked to Professor McGonagall’s classroom they were well aware of the looks Harry was getting and the looks they were getting for simply being with him. It was quite clear what it was. It was a mixture of hope, respect, and even fear. In case of the Slytherin’s there was no question what the meaning of their looks were. Rage, hatred, and once again fear. In either case Harry could not care less. He knew who he could trust and who he couldn’t. And there was much more of the latter.

They arrived to class and Professor McGonagall began her lesson. Today they were working on animal transformations. They had to transform a mouse into a teacup then the cup into a rabbit. To say some of the students were having trouble was an understatement. The trio and surprisingly Neville were the only ones to complete their assignment by the end of class. And they had finished in a short period of time. They had charms next which they were happy about because Professor Flitwick always made class as enjoyable as possible. Flitwick was probably the only professor that was not annoyed by Professor Umbridge interrupting during his classes last year. He simply answered her questions and explained what she wanted. But then again you never saw him angry so you had no base for comparison.

Ron was partnered with Hermione and Harry with Neville. They were working on invisibility charms which greatly interested the class. Neville already knew this charm because Harry had taught it to him, Ginny and Luna to use on their swords so they would go unnoticed throughout the day. And Harry, well he went without saying. So they occupied their time by amusing themselves with different things around the classroom to use the charm on. The most amusing of course was Lavender Brown. She, on the other hand, did ‘not’ find it the least bit funny.

“So Harry what are we going to do in this class of yours?” Neville asked as he cast the charm on Harry’s eyes. “Gross, I can see right into your eye socket. I don’t think you would want to go around like that!”

“Then take the charm off! And as for your question we will be going over dueling techniques. We’ll work on magical dueling for two or three weeks then more on to other forms. Swords and many other weapons. Of course I will be training you, Ginny and Luna with your swords beginning tomorrow. I also have to train Dumbledore in using his staff.”

“I still find it hard to believe that the two of you are related. I mean you both

have many of the same qualities, leadership for one thing but even that is different.” Neville added this last comment with a thoughtful look on his face. Harry just watched him with amusement in his eyes as Neville thought.

“How is it different Neville?” Harry prompted wanting to see what he had come up with.

“Well Harry you seem to be much more direct in your methods! You also seem a lot colder when there is something going on.” Neville sounded a little worried when he answered as if Harry would turn on him because of his answer.

“Neville you were not present when Dumbledore fought Voldemort last year, or at the end of forth year when we discovered Barty Crouch Jr. was impersonating Mad Eye. Both times Dumbledore had a cold fire in his eyes that I could never hope to compare to nor do I want to. Each time I have faced Voldemort I will admit that I was scared but that was nothing at all to what I felt each time I saw that look in Dumbledore’s eyes. I have never been that scared.” Harry mused on this for a moment before continuing.

“As for my methods I do what needs to be done. I am not trying to win a popularity contest and these people, ha; it was a mere slip of the tongue that I referred to them as people. They are animals plain and simple and they deserved what they got.” Harry made this last comment in a small voice as if relieving a bad memory. Neville was about to ask Harry what was wrong when the class was over and they began to file out and head to the Great Hall for lunch. Lunch was rather subdued and everyone was wondering what was wrong with Harry. He seemed almost lost. Then without warning he simply stood up and walked out of the hall.

“He seems depressed, like when we thought Sirius died. What happened, he was fine earlier?” Ron was clearly confused

“I don’t know, when we were in charms we were talking and I commented on the differences between the methods he and Dumbledore uses. He said something like ‘I do what needs to be done’ then commented how the Death Eaters were animals. After that it was like he simply shut himself down like he could not get a certain image out of his head. And Ron I think you are wrong, whatever he is thinking about is worse than Sirius Dying.” Neville explained. They all sat there trying to think what could possibly be giving Harry problems right now. They didn’t even notice Ginny get up and leave.

Harry sat on the bank of the lake thinking back to just a few days ago when he was hopping from one country to the next stopping attacks, just wishing that he had stayed in bed that day. It was not the fighting or the lives that he had taken that had prevented him from sleeping the last three days but something else, something worse. And he just could not get it out of his head. He was so wrapped up in his thoughts that he did not realize he had tears streaming down his face and that someone was coming up behind him.

“Harry!” Came a soft, quiet voice behind him. Harry was on his feet in a blink of an eye ready to attack. He quickly recovered however when he realized who it was.

“Oh, sorry Gin I didn’t know it was you!” He apologized but Ginny looked far from startled by his reaction. Quite the contrary really, she seemed rather calm except for her obvious worry.

“That’s ok Harry; I just came out here to see what was wrong. You seem a little, off.”

“What do you mean?” He had asked that a little too quickly Ginny thought.

“You know very well what I mean. At lunch you seemed almost as if you weren’t even there. By the way you might want to wipe the ‘water’ off your face. It would seem the squid splashed you a little.” Harry quickly turned around and wiped his face dry just wishing that she would go away and wishing that she would stay at the same time. So he just sat there staring out over the lake.

Ginny came and sat down next to him for a few minutes until she asked again. “So what is bothering you? And don’t tell me nothing because it is painfully obvious that something is wrong.” Harry opened his mouth as if to say something several times but nothing came out. So he just sat there. After five or so minutes to Ginny’s surprise he finally began to speak again but she would find that she really did not want to know the answer to her question.

“I had arrived at Dresden before the main attack had begun but there were a few Death Eaters that arrived early and found a way to amuse themselves until the rest of them got there. There was a small house about ten miles outside of town just off the main road. It was obvious that it was a wizarding family that lived there because I caught part of terms the father was screaming at them as they restrained him and his wife. The Death Eaters were holding them, making them watch as another, ‘abused’ their twelve year old daughter.

When I saw this, the rage just burned in me hotter than ever. It took only seconds for me to get down there and kill the Death Eater that was attacking the girl. When I turned around I had four wands pointed at me. The two Death Eaters and the girl’s parents.” Ginny looked absolutely shocked and she felt as if she would throw up but she stayed quiet thinking that Harry needed to get this off his chest.

“The girl’s parents were Death Eaters and they had set this up to smoke out anyone that maybe waiting for a Death Eater attack. So they sat there and watched as a man raped their daughter. All thought stopped at this point. I completely snapped. I don’t know how long it took but when I was done the four of them were no longer recognizable as ever being human. When I started thinking rationally and I saw what I had done I almost threw up.

I went into the house to check on the girl after I had composed myself only to find her dead. She could not handle what her parents had done to her and killed herself.” When Harry finished he once again had tears running down his face but he didn’t care and Ginny could not blame him. Without warning Harry completely broke down. He began shaking noticeably and could no longer hold back the quiet sobs that he had been holding in since he had started talking. Ginny quickly moved over to him

and wrapped him in a tight hug whispering soothing words into his ear. After Harry had calmed down they just sat there looking out over the lake, not saying anything, just looking. Soon they were joined by a familiar shaggy black dog that looked at Harry and Ginny with an amused look in his eyes.

“How are you doing Sirius?” In response to Harry’s question the dog simply barked and began to walk off towards the forest. Harry and Ginny, understanding that he had something to say, got up and followed. When they had reached the edge of the forbidden forest the dog transformed into Harry’s godfather Sirius Black.

“Well Sirius you are certainly looking better!”

“Never mind that Harry what is this I hear about you attacking a Manticore and four Chimaeras last night?”

“You did what?” Ginny almost screamed this question with a shocked look on her face.

“I did not attack four Chimaeras!” With this said both Ginny and Sirius breathed a sigh of relief. “I attacked TWO Chimaeras and a Manticore. Hagrid’s brother took care of the other two!” Their reactions greatly amused Harry and he had a hard time preventing himself from laughing.

They both looked incensed that he would even think of doing such a thing. “Why? Why would you even think of doing such a thing?” Sirius yelled. He thought a moment before answering.

“Ok Sirius how much do you know about what happened last night?”

“I was told you went into the forest last night on detention with Snape and you actually went out looking for them alone!”

“Well that is right but it is not all of it.” Harry then launched into the story of the events of the night before and Ginny and Sirius listened without interruption with their mouths falling open quite frequently. When he was finished both of them were speechless for a few moments until a question popped into Sirius’s head.

“Hagrid has a brother?” It seemed that this was the only thing he could find to say and Harry just rolled his eyes.

“Yes! A very large brother. Oh hell it is already time for dinner!” Harry and Ginny were quite shocked by this. They certainly did not think that they were out there that long. Sirius changed back into Padfoot and the three left the forest and headed back to the school.

When they arrived in the Great Hall it was obvious that many were excited, yet a little apprehensive about Harry’s new class that would be starting right after dinner. Harry and Ginny went through dinner quietly both still thinking about that afternoon by the lake. Soon dinner had finished and Harry made his way up to the head table.

“Alright, anyone not interested in taking this class leave the hall now!” Only thirty four had stayed plus those that were required to attend. Harry had expected this. The vast majority of wizards and witches believed that their magic was all they needed and that Defense against the Dark Arts was all the training that they would need to defend themselves. Harry smiled a bit when he saw that Malfoy and his goons had remained.

“Alright, all of you follow me!” Harry said as he led them out of the Great Hall and down towards the dungeons.

Chapter Twelve: Classes and Illusions

The students followed Harry a little warily down the steps to the dungeons due to their time there with Professor Snape. They were a bit apprehensive due in no small part to the fact that they were now in a class with some of their professors, including the Headmaster, being instructed by a student. It was going to be hard to think of them as students but that was exactly what they were.

They walked down the long dark passages, past the potions classroom and Snape’s office. Most present were getting a little antsy because they had never been that deep into the dungeons. They came to a stop across from the largest chamber off the hall and with a wave of Harry’s hand the wall opened up revealing an even larger chamber than the one across from them.

The room was roughly one half the size of the Great Hall and hanging from the walls was a very large collection of different types of hand held weapons. There were swords and knives of all shapes and sizes. There were maces, javelins and a rather nasty looking gauntlet with the fist covered in spikes.

“Alright everyone take a seat!” Harry said very politely.

“Where are we supposed to sit Potter? Where are the chairs?” Malfoy asked in a very condescending tone.

“Do you see any chairs Mr. Malfoy? Because I don’t remember bringing any with me. So it should go without saying that you are to sit on the floor.” Retorted Harry. Nobody else noticed but the professors and most of the members of the DA had sat down at the back of the room just watching as the other students began to complain about sitting on a dirty floor. Harry watched for ten minutes as the protests became more and more absurd before putting a stop to it.

“Well you certainly have a lot of spirit when it comes to complaining don’t you. You have ‘chosen’ to take this class knowing full well that you would be stuck with it. And yet here we are! I find it interesting that the only people able to follow this simple instruction were the ones ‘required’ to be here and those that ‘volunteered’ are already bitching.” The students turned to see the professors, even Snape sitting with many of the students waiting for the class to start and watching those standing with amusement.

“What did you think this was going to be? Did you think you would merely sit around and take notes? Did you think you would just be watching demonstrations? What I am going to be doing is teaching you how to hurt and in some situations kill, and I will accept nothing less than your absolute obedience to the rules that I set. If anyone is seriously injured intentionally or accidentally because someone was not following the rules, that person will spend the night in the hospital wing.” Suddenly everyone turned as there was a piercing scream echoing throughout the hall. What they saw could almost be viewed as comical. Draco Malfoy was dancing around clutching his right hand in obvious pain.

“Malfoy, I don’t seem to remember instructing you, or anyone else for that matter, to start handling those weapons. Now did I?” Harry asked calmly but with a rather unnerving grin on his face. “Now for those of you who were not as unfortunate as Mr. Malfoy here I will tell you this. Do not and I repeat do not attempt to take one of those weapons from the wall. If you try you will end up like Malfoy here. With every bone in your arm broken. Crabbe, Goyle, take Malfoy to the hospital wing.” The two hulking Slytherins were only too happy to do this as they hurried out of the hall after Draco. Harry then turned back to the rest of the class who looked quite shocked about what had just happened. Snape just looked furious at what had happened to his student and glared at Harry who was not the least bit intimidated.

“While in this class you will do what I say when I say, no exceptions! You will....” Harry was suddenly cut off by a loud bang that had shaken the walls throughout the castle. Those inside the armory looked around wondering what was going on when it happened again. “Alright, everyone wait here!” With that Harry rushed out of the armory heading in the direction of the entrance hall. Those he left behind, especially Ron, Hermione, Ginny and the teachers, rushed out after him.

They had reached the entrance hall just in time to see Harry come back inside as quickly as he could sealing the massive doors as he did. Looking around he spotted the group from his class. Or rather he spotted Professor Dumbledore. “Albus I’ll need to borrow your staff for a moment!”

“Of course.” Was all the elderly professor said as he handed Harry the magnificent staff that once belonged to Merlin himself. Upon receiving the staff Harry immediately took off for the marble staircase with everyone following behind.

“Where are you going Harry?” Someone called out.

“The battlements.” Was his only reply. His answer only served to confuse the group even more.

“And why are we going up there?” Harry recognized Snape’s drawling voice.

“Well if you’re stupid enough to follow me up there you will find out soon enough.” He remarked as he kicked open a door leading out side on top of the high walls of Hogwarts.

It was already dark outside but the moon left an eerie glow through the rain that was steadily coming down. The teachers and students looked down from the walls and saw

a lot of movement along the tree lines of the Forbidden Forest and the smell of decay assaulted them.

“What is it Harry?” That was a question he really didn’t want to answer but he figured what the hell they were going to see them anyway.

“They are called the Aruld. Also known as the Hounds of Hell. Demons!” His answer was short, sweet and to the point and a few looked over to Harry in terror as the rest scoffed.

“Come on, there is no such thing as demons!”

“Well thank you very much for clearing that up for me Hermione. Now stand back while I do this!” Harry snapped at his friend. He then paused as if in thought. “It seems I’ve had this conversation before.”

“You did! I said basically the same thing about the Acromantula in the forest last night.” Snape responded while he gave a little shudder. He obviously has no intention of repeating that experience. Harry gave a small chuckle at the memory then got to work.

“What are you going to do Harry?” Dumbledore asked a little nervously.

“Simple! I’m going to raise a Demon Lord!”

“YOU’RE DOING WHAT?” Several people yelled at once, mostly teachers.

“Yes, now shut up. I have no intention of screwing this up and have that thing turn on me. So be quiet.” Harry then stepped back and began tracing a very large rune on the floor of the battlements with Dumbledore’s staff while chanting in some obscure language that not even Dumbledore knew. As he was doing this most of those present went back to looking towards the forest and were met by a very disturbing and terrifying sight.

Down on the lawn approaching the school were three massive beasts that brought thoughts of fear and pain to all those looking upon them. They looked almost like massive dogs standing at about twelve feet high at the shoulders. They had no fur, instead they had jet black skin that clung to their very bones and looked as strong as any armor. Their muzzle was long and wide and carried four, foot long fangs that protruded out from the jaw, two on both the top and bottom. Their eyes held a fire within them that chilled their very bones. Every few seconds they let loose an awful baying sound that shook the very walls that Harry and his friends now stood upon. Out of no where Arthur Weasley ran out of the door onto the battlements and approached the Headmaster.

“Arthur what are you doing here?”

“I came down here to personally inform Sirius that he was a free man. Just as I got to the doors of the castle I saw those things come out of the forest but the doors were sealed so I had to run around to the kitchen entrance and talk the house elves into

letting me in. What the hell are those things?" He responded to the aged wizard in a rush.

"Demons." At this Arthur's blood ran cold and the color drained from his face.

"De, dem, demons! Are you sure? I mean what are we going to do about them?" Mr. Weasley was by all means a brave man but he drew the line at demons.

"Well that is the thing, you see Harry is in the process of raising his own now. A Demon Lord no less." Dumbledore replied gravely. If it was possible Mr. Weasley had gone even more pale. Before Mr. Weasley could respond there were gasps and shrieks all along the battlements that drew his attention.

Standing next to Harry was a hideous creature roughly the size of Harry himself. Like the demons on the school grounds it was completely black with the exception of its eye's which burned an unholy red. Its body appeared to be that of a human but its face was twisted and grotesque. Harry then turned to the Demon Lord and began growling at it which it promptly did the same as if it were some kind of speech. This continued for several minutes before Harry turned and went back to chanting as the demon turned to the Aruld as Harry called them. He simply raised his hand and a green fire erupted from his out stretched palm and shot towards the hideous beasts which instantly seemed to vaporize. The three hounds quickly disappeared much to the amazement of the students and teachers present. Shocked they turned back to Harry and realized that the Demon Lord as well was gone.

"Harry what happened? How did you get rid of them?" Ron asked getting a little excited.

"I didn't get rid of them, that was the Demon Lord. I raised him and he got rid of the Aruld."

"So what, there is another wizard down there in the forest that can raise demons and they brought those things here?"

"No Hermione not a wizard, a magician, there is a difference. But yes there is one down there and he has a Demon Lord right by his side."

"What makes you say that Potter?" Snape almost bit out.

"Because magicians can't raise the Aruld, it has to be done by a Demon Lord. But I want to know who did it."

"Probably Voldemort, who else?" Dean Thomas suggested.

"No, Tom wouldn't risk that. He has waited too long to come to power to take the risk of raising one of those things and then lose control of it. And magicians are loners so it wouldn't be a Death Eater so that leaves only one possibility."

"And what would that be Harry?" Asked Ginny not sure if she wanted to know the answer.

“Well that is rather simple. Magicians are nomads you see, all they do is wonder the world challenging every other magician they come across. He obviously knew there was one here.”

“But if he has a Demon Lord with him why did you send yours away?” Ron was getting more and more nervous as this conversation went on.

“Because, Demon Lords can’t face each other openly in this world! Just as our magic has limitations, they also have limitations placed on them. They instead fight using their underlings. Oh shit, here we go.” All the others turned to look back down on to the grounds to see yet another demon approaching the castle. It looked a good deal like Harry’s except a bit bulkier.

“Ok Harry, if your Demon Lord can’t get rid of that thing then what can.” Ron asked a little apprehensively.

“This can,” Came the reply as Harry held up Slytherin’s ax. “And besides, I have a bit of an advantage on him.” Many turned to look at him with shock clearly written on all their faces.

“What! You are actually going to fight that thing?” This question echoed from the mouths of nearly all present.

“Well I certainly hope your advantage is a big one.” Harry looked over to Ginny after she said this with no small amount of fear in her voice and gave her a little grin before turning back, facing the forest. He stood there perfectly still with his eyes closed for a moment. Without warning a pair of gold and scarlet wings emerged from his shoulder blades and tore through his robes.

Everyone there jumped back in shock as Harry stretched these magnificent wings as if they had always been there. Before anyone could comment in any fashion Harry dove off the battlements and glided to the grounds below. When he landed Harry took in the sights before him as he folded his wings back against his shoulders. Harry raised his head to survey the creature before him. He glared deep within the black pools of anger, pain and hatred which served as his eyes. They stood locked in silent battle as the students and teachers of Hogwarts and the lone magician lurking on the edge of the forest looked on in shock. No one, the demon included, could believe that this man had dared to meet him openly.

“You dare to stand in my way human? Why are you not on the walls with the rest of those cowards?” The demon growled fiercely but was clearly thrown off by Harry’s arrival on the grounds.

“Well you are here! I am here! I have my ax! And you have that rather nasty looking blade! With this said I would think that my presence here would be obvious!” When he seemed confused by his answer as though he did not understand Harry rolled his eyes and continued. “Ok I will talk real slow. You draw your sword! I grab my ax! Then we start swinging in an attempt to hit each other with them. It is called a fight. Do……. You……Understand now.” Harry had apparently hit a nerve with that as the

creature's eyes burst alive with the very fires of hell. He drew his sword and with a roar brought on by pure rage he charged at Harry.

/on the walls/

As Harry landed on the ground below everyone else was looking on still unable to react to what had just happened much less that Harry was now facing a demon.

"So beautiful!" That was all Ginny could say as her eyes were locked on Harry. This comment was heard by Ron who turned toward her angrily.

"Ginny how can you say that? That is not normal?" Upon hearing this Ginny's head shot around to glare holes into her brother.

"Ron what kind of friend are you? Harry has been your best friend for five years now but this simple thing has you turning against him. How many times has he saved your ass...?" And she went on and on and on. She certainly had inherited her mother's infamous temper. Ron just looked at his sister as if she had gone mad, clearly not understanding why she was ranting about his friendship with Harry in a situation like this. Slowly, very slowly, Ron seemed to understand but Ginny did not seem to be winding down.

"Ginny will you shut up! Thank you. I was not talking about Harry's wings, although that will be weird thinking about for awhile. I was talking about Harry going down there to fight a demon." Just as Ron said this a large shaggy dog was walking out onto the battlements looking a little confused. But upon hearing Ron's words a tall black haired man stood in its place.

"HARRY'S DOING WHAT?" Sirius's shout had gotten everyone's attention, effectively ending all other conversation. What followed was madness as the students realized who he was. They began shouting and most sending curses his way but they were all easily blocked by him, Dumbledore and Mr. Weasley as well as every member of the D.A. Everyone, except those that knew of his innocents, looked on at their schoolmates, headmaster and Minister of magic in shock. Frightened chatter had broken out. Many of the younger girls began crying that they were now surrounded by Death Eaters, something that Ron and Ginny found very amusing. Hermione on the other hand was very annoyed by all whining.

"Silence!" Even though many of the students there now believed him to be a Death Eater they were still quieted by the command of Dumbledore's voice. "Thank you. Now those of you who do not know, Sirius here is innocent. Minister Weasley has just informed me that he has been pardoned. It was in fact Peter Petigrew that betrayed the Potters and murdered those twelve muggles, framing Mr. Black. Now if you do not believe this you can hear it from Harry himself when he is done with.....um, whatever it is he plans to do down there." At hearing Dumbledore's statement the students quickly relaxed yet were still slightly weary as they turned back to see the confrontation below.

"Will someone please tell me what the hell is going on?" Sirius almost shouted making several people jump in surprise.

“Well your godson seems to be picking a fight Black.”

“Really, with who?” He asked growing a little excited while moving to the edge of the wall.

“A Demon Lord!” Snape sneered in reply.

“Oh, is that it!” Upon hearing this many turned toward him in shock. Sirius just glanced at them and continued. “I’ll explain later, just watch, this should be interesting.” Everyone’s attention was pulled back to Harry as they heard growling down below. Harry and the demon seemed to be talking in growls and it was obvious that Harry was winning the war of words by the expressions the other was making with its body. Suddenly the demon drew a sword and charged toward Harry who remained perfectly calm until the last possible second.

Suddenly Harry burst into action blocking several swings of the demon’s sword. Those along the walls watched in awe at the lightning like movements of both combatants. They were so engrossed in what they were seeing that they did not notice many other students and teachers arriving along side them wondering what was going on. They quickly found out and were both shocked and frightened.

Down on the grounds the sound of steel upon steel rang out clear in the night’s sky. Blows were being exchanged so fast that those watching could see nothing but streaks of moonlight off the blades. Both fighters landed many glancing blows which both were feeling for different reasons. The Demon Lord who is unaccustomed to human weapons having any effect on him was a little shocked and had no idea how to deal with the situation. Harry on the other hand had a rather nasty gash along his left shoulder that was causing his entire arm to go numb due to the demon’s weapon.

Due to the condition of his left arm Harry began swing his ax with only his right hand leaving his left hanging limp at his side. The demon sensing weakness moved in and attacked with a new ferocity swinging hard and fast as Harry barely had time to block. With his opponent seeing victory Harry finally made his move.

Right after blocking a rather complex attack Harry brought his ax up over his head and pulled it back down again aiming for the creature’s head. When he brought his sword up to block the feeble attack Harry pulled his left hand behind his back and removed a long golden dagger. With his opponent’s attention occupied he thrust his arm forward driving the dagger into the creature’s ribs just under his right arm. A hideous cry of anguish was released from his lips but was quickly silenced as the ax of Salazar Slytherin was buried into his chest.

Black blood fell upon the ground as Harry removed his weapons and quickly removed the filth from them and returned Gryffindor’s sword to it’s original size. Harry straightened up and scanned the edge of the forest in search of the magician but found no trace. Apparently he had taken off when he noticed that Harry’s weapons actually worked on his Demon Lord. With a wave of his hand the body was engulfed in flames destroying all that was left of the foul creature that had become some madman’s slave.

After all had been disposed of Harry spread his massive wings and lifted himself back up to where the others were watching. As he landed and retracted his wings Sirius approached him with a wide smile on his face. Harry was greatly amused to see that he had a bowl of popcorn in one hand.

"I see you enjoyed yourself." Harry commented to his godfather with a mischievous grin. "How's the popcorn?" At this everyone turned to see that he was in fact eating popcorn, which greatly confused everyone, especially those that knew how much of a basket case he was over Harry's safety.

"It's delightful. As for me enjoying myself, I have to say I am actually. Although you did toy around with that one there! Last time you made quick work of them."

"WHAT? What are you talking about? Harry exactly how many of those things have you fought?" Ginny almost, well not almost, ok she screamed.

"Other than that one? Only a few!" This answer did not seem to satisfy very many. "What, I had to! Even with me offering them one hundred Death Eaters they weren't going to let Sirius go so I had to bully them a little. When a mere human takes a sizable number out of their ranks they tend to be more cooperative." Harry finished looking rather sheepish.

"Sirius was being held by Demons?" Hermione asked looking rather pale.

"Yes! And an experience I do not plan to repeat. Although seeing them playing with their new toys while leaving almost made it worth it." He replied with a rather maniacal grin. "After all, my dear cousin, bless her soul, was among them."

"Yes I thought that would cheer you up. It certainly did for me after what she pulled."

"Harry I want to thank you for putting that bitch where she belongs." Everyone was surprised to hear this coming from Neville Longbottom of all people. They had never heard him say anything that hateful and with as much emotion before. But their questions as to why were quickly answered.

"Um, Ok who's his cousin, and why does everyone seem to hate her so much." Asked a rather timid fourth year boy.

"Bellatrix Lestrange." Neville answered through clenched teeth and everyone now understood where his hatred came from. Harry sensing that the subject had to be changed stepped in.

"Ok I have to ask everyone except the teachers, Sirius, the Weasleys, Hermione, Luna, and Neville to please leave." The command in his voice left no room for argument and the others had quickly gone back inside. Those remaining were looking on at him with confusion for a while before he started.

"Ok, Ginny, Neville, Luna and Grandfather, I have something I need to give to you." He walked up to each of them and gave them all a small round stone, almost like a marble. After examining them they looked to him for an explanation but got none as

they were teleported away from Hogwarts.

“Potter what the hell is going on?” That question was echoed by many who were no panicked at the sudden disappearance the headmaster, there friends, or in the case of Ron and Mr. Weasley, their daughter and sister.

“QUIET! Thank you. Now I will explain. They have been sent away to train just as I had. They will not be gone long. Well at least not to you. They and I will be back Sunday evening before dinner. I will leave illusions here so that the student body will not know that anything is happening. You WILL continue on as normal. Voldemort thinks that I have already unlocked their powers so he will not risk another attack on the school just yet.”

“And if he decides to attack anyway?” Snape sneered although it was more for show now since he had actually grown to respect Potter.

“Then Professor, you will find that my eyes are everywhere and always open.” Harry finished as he sent a silent message to Snape which he replied with a nod. Then Harry too vanished, and in his place were Ginny, Luna, Neville, Professor Dumbledore, and another Harry.

“I guess these are the illusions.” Ron said as he poked the one of his sister.

“Ow. Ron you prat.” And with that the illusion slapped him shocking everyone. The fact that someone could create illusions that realistic was mind boggling. Remus was pulled out of his thoughts however when the Harry illusion approached him.

“Hello I’m Harry Potter, ‘the illusion that lived’, damned glad to meet you.” With that said he patted him on the shoulder and walked of back into the castle.

“That was Harry Potter ‘the illusion that lived’, he was damned glad to meet you.” Said <Ginny> and walked over to Mr. Weasley gave him a kiss on the cheek and walked inside.

“I’ve got a headache.” Snape sighed rubbing his temples as Professor Flitwick bounced around excited thinking that he would have to remember to ask Harry how he achieved this.

Chapter Thirteen: Surprises Revealed

Ginny had awoken with a blinding headache and feeling rather nauseous. She sat up and looked around. She quickly surmised that she was not at Hogwarts but could not think of how she could have gotten here, or even where here was. Lacking anything better to do she got up and walked to the door. When she reached it she listened carefully for any sound on the other side. Not hearing anything she slowly opened the door and looked around and what she saw made her a little nervous.

“Ginny? What the hell happened? Where are we?” It was Neville.

“Not a clue but I am going to find a way out of here!”

“That would be a waste of time, there does not seem to be a way out of this hallway.” Ginny and Neville turned to see Dumbledore and Luna right behind him. Both looked extremely confused.

“Ah, so good to see that you are awake, did you sleep well?” The four turned sharply, wands drawn, to the new arrival. He simply waved his hand and all four wands were now in his possession.

“Just who are you?” Ginny yelled as Neville and surprisingly Luna looked a little unnerved. Dumbledore on the other hand looked thoughtful.

“Well I usually change my name all the time but I found that I rather like Forge so call me that.” He said with a smile.

“Forge?” Ginny asked and then it hit her. “Oh shit.” She sighed as she hung her head. After a moment she composed herself enough to scream. “HARRY I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!”

“My dear girl, whatever for?” Asked Forge in a mock horrified tone, looking rather scandalized.

“Well he could at least have warned us that we would end up here sometime.” Neville added.

“Well it would not have done any good; you would not have remembered the warning. If I am correct you do not remember anything passed the point where Harry actually killed that demon am I right.” At their nods he continued. “For some reason the change of the pace of time jumping from one world to the next knocks off several minutes of your memories the first time you do it. Even today Harry does not remember that I brought him here just minutes after he tried to kill himself.”

“He did what?” All four of them looked horrified at the very thought. “Wait he told us about that so how can he not remember? He said that you could look into the past here. Why hasn’t he looked back and seen it.” The headmaster asked curiously.

“Because that happened right after he returned home and found his family murdered. I had informed him of the fact that I brought him here right after he had found them. He

has no desire to remember those images, and I don't blame him. He relived those moments so that he could inform you of the truth at your meeting but then quickly wiped his memory of the incident, so I suggest that you don't bring it up." He finished sadly.

"Ok, well lets get going. We have a lot to do. We will first get something to eat, by then Harry should be here and we can break some wands." Forge went on leading them out of the hall and into a dinning area.

"Wait, what do you mean break some wands? If you mean those that are in your hand, we need those." Neville exclaimed.

"Well of course you need them but for an entirely different purpose then you think. And for that purpose we need to break them while still leaving the core intact." He answered excitedly. "And I have not had the chance to break one in along time."

"You sound like you enjoy it. Is there some sort of magical thing that happens when you break a wand that you like?" Luna asked a little confused.

"No, I just hate wands. If you remember the explanation Harry gave you in the Hall of the Phoenix the other night you will remember that wands are really very unnecessary. They were created as a way for parents to slack off when teaching their children and now look, every wizard in the world is completely dependent upon them."

"Except Harry?" Ginny asked.

"No Harry is not a wizard, never really was considering the phoenix thing, but without counting that he ceased to be a wizard many years ago when he unlocked his power here." At this he got many confused looks and Professor Dumbledore chose to voice his questions.

"Many years ago? Harry said he only spent two years here."

"He did but he also spent many more outside of this realm learning what I could not teach him. He spent time with Merlin learning about the powers that come with being a Phoenix Lord. He was actually at Hogwarts when it was founded and studied there learning magic that is to powerful for wizards today to control. He spent a lot of his time with many sorts of medicine men from different cultures learning all he could. He even compiled several dozen books of magic, potions and an assortment of other stuff he researched himself. The kid has an aptitude for learning that knows no bounds. Well I shouldn't really call him a kid anymore since he is far from it."

"Just how many years has he been doing this 'study'?" Ginny asked.

"Well that is not my place to say really. But lets just say he is a lot older than he looks, as you will be when you finish here." He finished with a mysterious smile. It was not until that point that the four 'new arrivals' noticed that they had sat down and eaten several courses without noticing, being to wrapped up in Forge's tale.

"Um, ok so what do you need with the core of our wands?" Dumbledore then inquired.

“Well it is not me that needs it, that’s Harry. I’m still confused by the whole matter. The thing is they say the wand chooses the wizard, right. Well Harry got this crazy idea of using the core to bond you with that animal or something like that. So if your core is unicorn hair then that particular unicorn will be bonded to you and will be your companion.” At this Neville began to tremble drawing attention to him.

“What’s wrong? Are you sick?” Forge asked knowing perfectly well what was wrong but didn’t show it.

“My, my core is Dra, Dragon heartstring!” Neville almost cried earning a sympathetic pat on the back from the Headmaster.

“Don’t worry Neville, like he said you will be bonded to the dragon and he will be your companion and friend. He will die to protect you, and think about it, Hagrid will be thrilled.” Harry said surprising all but Forge by his sudden arrival. Upon seeing him Ginny jumped towards him and smacked him hard on the arm.

“Damn, why do you have to be so violent?” Harry teased earning him another smack.

“You scared the hell out of us. I know you could not warn us before we got sent here but you could have been here when we woke up so we didn’t start throwing curses at Forge.” Ginny had started off yelling but quickly lowered her tone to a playful one.

“You cursed Forge? Are you getting old?” He looked at the man on the other side of the table.

“They did not curse me. They pointed those sticks at me and I had them in less than a second. Needless to say they were very surprised.”

“Sticks, you mean our wands?”

“Well they might as well be sticks.” Harry answered and tossed a package to Forge who looked up at him in surprise. “It’s from Alisia, she said you haven’t been to see her in a couple of months, so with you being here it’s no telling how long it’s been.”

“Well I went and saw her right after Merlin explained to you about the phoenix stuff, so it wasn’t that long ago.” He replied innocently.

“Do you realize that you haven’t seen her for several centuries now?” Upon hearing that he quickly opened the box and gasped. Looking at everyone with a red face he quickly left with Harry laughing behind him.

“What was in the box Harry?” Ginny asked although she had another question on her mind.

“Nothing that is really strange now, but back where she’s from it is the equivalent of sending someone some very dirty pictures of yourself. If I am right Forge is right about to pay her a visit. Now as to the question you really wanted to ask. Yes I did say centuries. As I said at the meeting the other night you can stay here as long as you

want and go anywhere any time. With those exceptions of course.”

“But you said you were only here for two years and Forge said you spent the rest of your time basically time hopping. I mean, how is this possible?” Harry silently cursed himself for forgetting that.

“Ok, here it is. Like I told Hermione out on the battlements about magicians being different from wizards. Magicians use spirits and demons to do the things they need done, they are not powerful magically so they use runes and incantations to raise spirits and demons. Sorcerers they use their will. That means exactly what it sounds like. They draw in the energy around and pull it into themselves and release it to do what they need done. They simply will something to happen. It’s not like playing god or anything for them, they have many restrictions, and many rules that they have to follow. If they cross one of these lines then they could kill themselves. Their main rule is that they can not will something out of existence. The universe, nature, will not permit that and will destroy them. With all the rules they have many chose not to use this power.

“Now magicians are like muggles they usually live sixty to seventy years before they die. Wizards consistently live twice that, some times more. Sorcerers on the other hand have an indefinite life span. They do not die of old age or hunger. Don’t die of disease or anything like that. Though they can die of an accident or someone killing them in any way so there you go.”

“With me though, being a Phoenix Lord, I could theoretically live forever. But where’s the fun in that. But I do have to live until the next Phoenix Lord is born. Which kind of sucks considering that could be any where from one thousand years away to two thousand. You can imagine my surprise when I was told this. I figured what the hell if life gets boring after a few centuries I’ll just come back here and then go back to the time the next one was born. Well Merlin shot that down.”

“We also have a War Mage. Which is kind of like the Phoenix Lord but with different abilities. King Aurthur was the last War Mage so you can see where this is going to lead.” As he said this someone else walked into the room and greeted everyone cheerfully.

“Hello everyone, I’m King Arthur Pendragon, damned glad to meet you.” When he said this Harry snorted and held back a laugh while everyone stared at him in aw. “Harry those illusions were lovely, Neville will please come with me.” He said smiling with a little glint in his eye. Neville, being a little to shocked to refuse wordlessly got up and followed. “I’ll have him back soon Harry!”

“So Neville is the new War Mage?” Dumbledore asked shocked.

“Yes. Unfortunately the same rules apply to him as to me. He will have to stay alive until the next. Which again could be a couple thousand years.” He said sadly.

“Unfortunately Ginny and Luna, you also share this fate. If I was not a Phoenix Lord I would be a mage due to all the extra training I had and because of the power I have also. You two are both mages. Which means that you have great amounts of power

and other hidden abilities. A long time ago there were many mages but no where near as many as wizards. They were known as the freaks of the magical world. People were afraid of their power so the Ministry of Magic tried to hunt them all down. Only a few escaped.” Harry was truly devastated that he had to tell Ginny that she would see her family and all her friends die and not be able to join them for a long time. However when he looked up with unshed tears in his eyes Ginny was actually smiling.

“Well at least I will have some people to spend that time with. So what do we have to wait for?” She was being light hearted but Harry could tell that this burden weighed heavily on her heart.

“It is your task to protect the lines of Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff until a certain time, as I must also do for Gryffindor, Slytherin and Merlin. You two must wait until the lines of the founders and Merlin are joined in one child. How long it will take I don’t know. But this child will be both the new War Mage and Phoenix Lord. Just as we are destined to fight a great evil, so is he or she and it will be more terrible than I can stand to think about. If we fail, if any of these lines were to die out before then the consequences will be far worse than any of you can imagine.” He finished in just above a whisper.

“But you obviously have much more power than Voldemort already and then with the four of us, that won’t be much of a fight, let’s go right now.” Luna said cheerfully which shocked Harry, Ginny and Dumbledore.

“No Luna, Voldemort is not the problem, he is Malfoy compared to this. But Tom is also very devious and can not be underestimated at the lengths he would go to on his way down.” Harry said very sadly. It pained him to think of something worse than the man that murdered his parents but it was a very real threat.

“That is correct Harry. Now may I borrow your Grandfather for a moment.” Came a kindly old voice much like that of Dumbledore’s.

“Sure Grandfather!” After saying this Harry looked very confused which was shared by all present, even Merlin.

“That exchange did sound a little odd.” Harry could hear both men say as they walked out of the room.

“That was Merlin?” Ginny asked looking at the closed door stunned. “He looks so much like Dumbledore.”

“That’s only natural.” Harry laughed.

“Does this mean that he is going to live for a long time to?”

“No Luna. He doesn’t have very much time left.” Harry said in a strangled voice as a tear rolled down his cheek.

Harry sat at the table in the dining hall after Ginny’s and Luna’s ancestors had come for them thinking of all that was going to happen. He had just discovered that Albus

was his Grandfather, his last remaining relative, and he would soon be gone. Unable to stand these thoughts any longer he decided to go check up on the Death Eaters.

Harry peered into the well and concentrated on the Death Eaters and soon he began to see them being addressed by Voldemort. Not much was said except the usual muggle bashing. Soon the Death Eaters began leaving with the exception of one.

“Ah, Severus what have you discovered?” Voldemort hissed sending a shiver down Snape’s back.

“My Lord, it seems Potter has taken himself and the other heirs away to be trained further as he had done. We were told that he was going to leave illusions in their place but they seem too real for that to be true.” He stopped there trying to find away to say this without being punished but when Voldemort grew impatient he continued. “He claims that you are too weak at this particular time to launch another attack on the school so there should be no trouble. And the other professors agreed.” Snape finished quickly and braced himself for his punishment. But it never came.

“That insolent child thinks me weak. Did he say when he was to return?” He screeched.

“Monday evening my Lord.” He answered in a stutter.

“Good we shall see who is weak when he returns to find his precious school in ashes and those he had cared for dead by my hand. He will pay and pay dearly!” He ranted on for quite some time before he returned his attention to Snape. “Severus did he say how he would be able to teach them all they need to know in three days?” Snape waited for a few moments before answering.

“He says that he will slow down time around them and spend as much time as is needed training and then return. Over the summer he was able to train for two years before returning. But again I do not know how this is possible. I’m not even sure if he really understands it either, but I will look into it further.”

“Very good Severus, now go back to that school before anyone starts looking for you. Be ready when we arrive two days from now.”

“As you command Master!” And with that he apparated away and into the forest outside Hogwarts. “Ok he took the bait!” He spoke out in his mind.

<Alright Professor, thanks a lot. I will bring it with me when we return Sunday.>
Harry’s voice echoed in his mind.

“No problem Potter.” Snape almost seemed to skip his way up to the castle as he thought of what he would be receiving for leading Voldemort into this little trap.

Harry stood at the well chuckling to himself when he realized someone was standing beside him. Ginny howled with laughter as Harry almost jumped out of his skin.

“Damn it Ginny don’t do that to me, I became a senior citizen a long time ago.” Harry

joked as he clutched his chest.

“You’ll live! So what is it that you have to bring Snape?” She asked just a little bit curious.

“Oh I promised him that if he manages to trick Voldemort into attacking the school Sunday night then I would create him a potions chamber like my own, fully stocked of course, and give him a copy of the books I have compiled on various potions.”

“You have a potions chamber? Where in the castle is it?” Ginny asked him looking shocked that he would care about potions enough to set up his own lab.

“Oh, it is not in the castle. It is here in my pocket. Here take a look!” And with that Harry pulled a small box out of his robes and set it on the floor. Suddenly it rapidly began to get bigger. When it finished growing Ginny was standing in front of a massive set of doors. Harry pushed the door open and led Ginny inside.

She looked around clearly impressed with her surroundings. Ginny always did like potions even though Snape was an ass. “I can see why Professor Snape would trick him if he got this as the price.”

“Apparently after we spent that night in the forest making potions to heal the Centaurs he has been a bit sulky about his own potions room. I was going to make him one anyway but this way I got something from it and I won’t have Ron breathing down my neck about being nice to Snape.” He finished with a grin. Ginny laughed at this last comment and her heart fluttered as he grinned back at her. And unknown to her, his did as well.

“Well how did you do this? I mean this room is amazing!”

“Actually it is similar to the room of requirements. Except I have to supply everything that is in here, it doesn’t just appear like it does there. So I had to collect all of the items in here and in the other room.” He explained.

“Other rooms?” She asked looking very confused since there was only one door and that led out.

“Yes like I said it’s like the room of requirements. When I need to make a potion the door leads here. If I want to train, it goes to the training room. There are also cells for Death Eaters, a bedroom just in case, as well as a sitting room and kitchen.”

“Well you certainly come prepared, don’t you?” She teased. “So what happened after you killed that demon?”

“Let’s check!” They left potions lab and he returned it to his pocket. Harry turned back to the well and began thinking of standing on the battlements after the fight. Suddenly the images began to focus and voices could be heard. Ginny watched as many people, including herself, began arguing about fighting demons and acts of stupidity. She saw herself and the others disappear and Harry explaining what was going on before he left to be replaced by the illusions. She found the ‘illusion that

lived' bit rather comical and could not stop herself from laughing. Her mood had clouded over however as she saw her illusion kiss her father on the cheek.

"Ginny are you ok?" Harry asked quietly and in a voice full of concern.

"I'm not going to see them for a long while am I?" She asked sadly although she already knew the answer.

"I'm afraid not. You won't have to stay away from them as long as I did but it will still be a very long time." Harry sighed, hurt deeply seeing Ginny so sad.

"Well why can't I learn the stuff out of your books at home?" she sobbed.

"Well for one; you must learn these things for yourself. And two; I have several dozen very large books of information that you, Neville and Luna must learn word for word before we even have a chance to win this war. You could study here or leave and learn from those long since dead and then go home two days after you left. Or you could go home and learn it in which case you would be finished with the books in a couple hundred years and have no way to get the rest of information you will need."

"In our world we simply don't have nearly enough time to learn what we must in order to be successful. Here, and in the past we have all the time we need and more."

"Harry how did you do it? Being here so long without your friends I mean!" She asked in a dull whisper.

"Well I kept extremely busy. I met new friends as well from all over, from different walks of life. I even used illusions to make me look younger and went through Hogwarts several times over." He said with a very mysterious grin.

"Why would you go through several times?" She asked dumbstruck at the thought.

"Well I did it mainly to learn more about different people. Death Eaters mostly. I was at Hogwarts the same time as my parents and became quite good friends with them although they did not know my true identity. Sirius figured it out the night I got him out of that demon infested hell hole since I happened to come in looking like one of his old school buddies. Imagine his surprise when he realized it was me. Remus has yet to figure it out though." Ginny could not help but laugh at this. Suddenly she enveloped him in a tight hug that would have done Mrs. Weasley proud.

"Thank you for talking to me about this and telling the truth even though it was something I wished could be avoided." After she released him from her vise like grip they walked to the sitting room where Forge, Neville, Luna and Albus were waiting waiting patiently, or in Forge's case, impatiently.

"Well it is about time. We have been waiting for what seemed like an eternity." Forge snapped.

"Oh be quiet you just want to break a wand." Harry snapped back playfully.

“Yes well, um, ok lets get started shall we.” Forge said cheerfully picking up the first wand. Luna’s.

<SNAP> The wand was broke in two down the middle leaving two long half pieces. From inside he gently pulled four long silver/white unicorn hairs and placed them onto the table.

<SNAP> The next wand broke easily and Forge extracted the dragon heartstring that was contained inside and placed in onto the table next to the unicorn hair.

“Ok we will not do this with Professor Dumbledore since he is already bonded with Fawls.” Said Forge moving onto Ginny’s wand.

<SNAP> Contained within her wand was a magnificent Phoenix feather. Harry stared at the feather with a certain recognition but he could not place it since he had come across many Phoenixes since coming here.

“Alright Luna, take the Unicorn hairs in your right hand!” Harry asked. She did as she was told and soon Harry was standing in front of her with his hand pressed against her forehead. He began chanting in some obscure language and Luna began to glow in a holy light. The light continued to increase until it was at the point where none present could see. The indescribable light soon faded and all but Harry and Forge were shocked. Standing beside Luna was the most beautiful unicorn they had ever seen. It looked just like any other unicorn but the sheer power of it’s presence was astounding. As it was standing there the four hairs pulled out of Luna’s hand and reestablished their spot on the creature’s tail.

Harry then moved on to Neville who for all intensive purposes looked quite pale. “Ok Neville, pick it up.”

“But Harry if my core is Dragon Heartstring then that means the dragon is dead doesn’t it.” Neville hastily asks.

“Yes it does Neville but when we are finished it will be here to reclaim his, um, property, and live again.” Neville finally picked it up knowing he was not going to get out of this. As he did with Luna, he placed his palm on Neville’s forehead and began to chant again. Once more there was a brilliant light and when it receded a massive beast stood behind the frightened Gryffindor who was to panicked to turn to see his new companion. He did not notice as the heartstring was pulled from his grasp nor the sound of someone speaking to him trying to calm him.

“Easy little one, no need to get excited.” Upon hearing this Neville looked around for the owner of the voice only to come face to face with the dragon. He wanted to scream and run back into the castle but something within the eyes of the creature kept him there. There was no anger, hatred or malice but there was also no fear. In fact it seemed quite happy to be there.

“Um, ah, you can talk?” Neville asked nervously while he swallowed.

“Yes but only to you, and that one over there. You both seem quite remarkable.”

‘She’ said very politely.

“Ok Ginny your turn!” Ginny quickly picked up the feather getting very excited. Harry repeated the same process with Ginny but hers turned out a little different. When the light had faded there was no phoenix in the area. Everyone, including the dragon and unicorn, looked around in confusion. Without warning the feather shot from her hand and just floated there in mid air. Finally something began to happen but it was not what everyone was expecting.

Harry’s wings had burst through his shoulder blades and ripped through his robes. When they were completely exposed the floating feather quickly attached its self to his left wing. Everyone looked around in shock and confusion, animals included.

“What the hell is going on? How could one of my feathers have ended up in Ginny’s wand?” Harry almost shouted.

“Well Harry you see that would be my fault.” Upon seeing Harry’s face he continued. “Well you see after your fight with that demon at Hogwarts I jumped down there and picked up a feather that fell from your wing during the fight. I then went back and gave it to the old crackpot wand maker just in time for her to start school.

“Does anyone else have the sudden urge for a drink?” Harry said as he sat down rubbing the bridge of his nose. “I need some fresh air. I am going to take care of some stuff. Luna, Neville spend this time getting to know your new companions. I should be back in about two weeks so when I get back we are going to start your training. Grandfather, you are going to need to read this.” Harry said as he handed the headmaster a thick ancient looking volume.

“Ok Harry, what do I do?” Ginny asked a little timidly. Harry gave her a little lopsided grin before answering.

“Well you are coming with me of course!” And with that he grabbed her hand and they were gone.

Chapter Fourteen: A Little Trip

Ginny's feet slammed into the ground and she would have fallen over if Harry had not caught her in time. She looked up to see him grinning down at her trying without much success of holding his laughter in. Ginny, torn between amusement and embarrassment, straightened herself up with a little giggle. After composing herself she looked around attempting to figure out where they were.

"Um, Harry, where are we?"

"Medieval China! There are a few things I have to do here." Harry answered absently.

"Oh. And what is that?" She asked curiously.

"I have to make sure two people get married and sober someone up and get them on the right track."

"Harry we can't change the past! Anything we do, however small, could have far reaching consequences in our own time." Ginny reminded Harry while doing a very good impression of Hermione.

"Calm down Gin, I know what I am doing. While I was doing my 'study', as you put it, sometimes I would come across someone who would recognize me. They knew my name, well my first name anyway. How they knew me I did not know until I came across a manuscript detailing a 'classic battle' between two great wizards. Normally I would have read it, think it was a myth and forget it. I would have done this this time as well except that the description of the wizard that emerged victorious fit me to a tee, name and all.

A year later I actually fought that battle. After the fight I thought of that manuscript again and realized that it was a perfect description of the fight. To say this freaked me out was an understatement." Ginny listened on quietly, taking notice of the frustration in his voice and knowing very well where it came from and why.

"So I did the only thing I could really think of doing at that time. I dug through every book, manuscript, scroll, or tablet looking for a reference to a powerful wizard named Harry that fit my description. And there was a lot. With the use of Forge's well I was able to go through them and find out which were fact, exaggerated history or just plain myth. After gathering all of these writings together it took me several years to go through them. It is frustrating really. Can't even go into the past without people noticing me, hating me, or even fearing me for something I hadn't even done yet." Ginny had a lot of information going through her head at the moment but she could only think of one thing to ask, and it was something she should have already known.

"Harry how is it possible that these people know of you for doing these things in the past when you hadn't even gone back to that point in history yet." This part had clearly confused her by the tone she used in voicing her question.

"This is the past Ginny, not the future. Unlike the future the past IS set in stone. The first thing the Ministry tells someone when they issue them a time turner is that under

no circumstances are they to change something in our past. What they just don't seem to realize is that it is impossible to change the past in anyway. Time its self will not allow it." When Harry stopped talking for a moment he looked at Ginny who was staring at him in confusion. He just chuckled to himself and went at it with a different approach.

"Ok let me put it this way. You lost a loved, one so you decide to go back in time to prevent this person's death but you can't manage to do it, why?" Harry's lips twitched into a smile as confusion faded from her eyes.

"Because if that person had not died then they would have never gone back to try to prevent it. Therefore it would have been impossible to do so. Wait you and Hermione changed the past when you freed Sirius."

"No, we changed the outcome that the past had placed before us. When we freed Sirius our other selves had already gone back to do what we had just finished doing. Everything we did before hand was just preparing in advance what we would need in order to be successful. Freeing Buckbeak and saving Sirius and my other self from the Dementors was just preparation for the present so no harm to the timeline was done. It is the same with the myths about me. I had not yet done them but they are already part of history." Harry concluded and was happy that Ginny seemed to understand that they could not cause any damage to the timeline by what transpired here.

"So Harry where are we going?" She huffed out as they were walking up a rather steep grassy hill.

"The Forbidden City." Was his only answer as they crested the hill revealing a magnificent city in the valley below. Harry looked to his side to see Ginny looking on in wonder at the mystical city that holds so much history of the magical world. However she also looked apprehensive.

"Um, Harry, how are we going to get in? I mean, it's called the Forbidden City for a reason." As an answer he just sent a mischievous grin her way, took her hand and vanished from the hill side to reappear inside the city's walls.

"Ok, dumb question. You could have told me you could go through the wards before you did it." Ginny told him. She was just a little bit irritated that he had pulled her through some powerful anti-apperation wards without warning.

"But where would the fun be in that? Come on we have to get to the palace. Well what do you know, we have an escort." Harry stood there calmly as several guards approached from all sides and they did not look happy. Ginny moved closer to Harry hoping that he could get them out of this without blood shed. Namely their own.

<You, what are you doing? How did you get here?> Said one of the guards. Ginny had no idea what he had just said but to her utter surprise Harry answered him in his own language and this set off a rather heated argument about something between the two. She distinctly heard Harry's name spoken several times but whatever Harry was telling them they did not seem to be buying it. Suddenly Harry threw up his hands and the wind began to pick up all around them. A huge vortex began spinning around

themselves and the soldiers. With a soft spoken word the vortex it's self was set aflame creating a massive whirlwind of fire. Soon, as the fire had replaced the air, water replaced the flames. Feeling confident that he had gotten his point across, Harry lowered his arms.

The guards looked between each other with pale faces and wide eyes. Many looked as if they would pass out and the rest looked about ready to run. Finally the leader nodded to them and began leading them to the palace.

"Harry what the hell was that?" There was no doubt that this was Molly Weasley's daughter. She had a temper that matched if not surpassed her mother. Harry found this rather amusing.

"Sorry about that but I had to prove to this guy that I am who I said I was."

"So people around here have heard of you?" With a grin Harry answered

"Yes Gin, I am big in China about this time. I pretty much placed the last emperor on the thrown. As way of a thank you he had his aids teach me all I could learn here. While I was staying here I trained his son, the current emperor, in hand to hand combat. He was about fifteen at the time and I had the appearance of fifteen year old so it went a lot smoother then if it had been someone older. Though I doubt they could find someone older."

"Exactly how old are you?" She asked wondering just how long he has been jumping from time to time.

"Well that depends on how you look at it. When we are finished training and return to our time with all appearances I will be a sixteen year old student. But in reality it would be something different."

"Ok you are dodging the question! Why?" Ginny was starting to get very annoyed with Harry, even though she knew it really wasn't any of her business she wanted to know anyway.

"Yes Ginny I was dodging the question but since you want to push it I'll tell you. I was fifteen when I went to train with Forge, I spent two years with him. Then I spent another six hundred and seventy three years studying what I could, you do the math!" Ginny's insistence for an answer to a question that was clearly none of her business annoyed Harry to no end so he just threw out a number large enough to shock her into silence while keeping the real answer his own closely guarded secret. Ginny was absolutely shocked. Six hundred and ninety one years old. But what shocked her much more than that was the coldness in Harry's voice when he had answered her question.

Ginny was so caught up in her thoughts that she did not realize that they had just arrived at the palace. She just kept walking, following Harry and the guards but with her mind on other things. She was not thinking of Harry's age or the tone of his answer but of the future. They were going to live for centuries but they could not reveal themselves for what they were.

Were they to just live for some time and then go into hiding for the rest of their time on earth. Ginny paid no attention to the elaborate engravings that lined the walls or the ornate vases and carved statues of stone and jade.

It was not until now that the full impact of what her life was to become came to the forefront of her mind. She would live to see all of her friends and family grow old and die. And the pain of that loss would be with her for centuries before she herself would die. Her thoughts then turned back to Harry. Over his many years he must have seen many friends fall prey to time. She made up her mind to ask him about all these thoughts later on.

Ginny pulled herself out of her thoughts in time to notice that they were standing in what appeared to be a private sitting room. She looked around just now noticing the amazing decorations and artifacts that resided in this place and they left her speechless. While looking she was lost to the world but somehow Harry managed to get through to her.

“Ginny. Your Imperial Majesty, my I present Virginia Weasley. Ginny this is the Emperor Sun Yi.” Ginny not knowing what to do, curtsied very off balanced. She was so nervous that she looked no one in the eye.

“So formal Harry! I think we know each other well enough to drop the formality when in private. Don’t you?” The Emperor said with a little twinkle in his eye, not unlike Professor Dumbledore’s.

Ginny finally looked up to see this monarch that was once a student of Harry’s and was a little surprised. He was a head shorter than Harry. But since Harry was six and a half feet tall that was not much. He appeared to be sixty five to seventy years old and had an aura of kindness about him. She immediately decided that she liked him.

“Well that is good to hear. It is always good to be well liked.” At Ginny’s shock Harry and Sun Yi chuckled and Harry explained.

“Sun Yi here is a telepath as well as a mind reader.”

“Yes a very useful ability when you wish to know one’s true intentions. And in my position that is always an advantage. Never worked on you though.” The old man added as an afterthought.

“Well if my thoughts could be read I would be at a supreme disadvantage to many. And I don’t like people knowing what I am going to be doing from one second to the next.” This answer seemed to amuse Sun Yi greatly due to his chuckle.

“If anyone thought you had changed over these long years my friend, that statement just proved them wrong.” He said with a smile as he sat down in a large comfortable looking chair while motioning for Ginny and Harry to do the same.

“As a matter of fact I have changed a bit. For one I am not as bitter as I once was, but then I am also not as forgiving either.” This statement intrigued the old man.

“The world is nothing without forgiveness! You would do well to remember that. On another note what happened to cause ‘The Feared Harry’ to lighten up.”

“The Feared Harry?” Ginny asked with confusion. Harry looked at her and decided that he would tell her as well as the other three the truth so why not start with her.

“Well I have not been studying this entire time. There have been fights, um, battles, like the one I told you about.” Even though he had decided to tell her he could not seem to do it. He started to feel hot and under pressure and decided to step outside for some air. Ginny seemed concerned about Harry and was about to go after him when Sun Yi stopped her.

“He needs this time to himself, my dear.” He told her kindly but it almost seemed there was a warning in there. Ginny listened to him and sat back down looked both confused and worried.

“What’s wrong with him? Just a minute ago he was joking and talking as if there was not a care in the world.” The old man across from her looked at her sadly before answering.

“Harry is a very troubled person. He always has been and probably always will be. He does not mind people knowing of the things he has done but it pains him greatly to speak about them. We have many myths and legends about Harry going back many centuries, as do many other cultures. When I first knew him I was terrified at first but we soon became friends as he tutored me in many things including your language and the arts of war. Finally after about a year, I worked up the courage and asked him about all the legends and if they were true. He simply waved his hand and two stacks of parchment appeared on my desk. All he said was that the one on the left was fact and the right was nothing but myth. Then he left the room.

The stories all call him ‘The Angel of Death’, ‘The Dark Angel’, or ‘The Feared Harry’ because quite frankly everyone feared him. As I started reading the factual accounts of what had happened I must admit that I began to fear him once again. The legends did nothing but down play what happened. Granted they did not know what truly happened, they just went on the aftermath of the various fights and battles. But the reality was far worse. He showed no emotion, no sympathy what’s so ever in his encounters. Many wizards and War Lords tried to make names for themselves by defeating him. And he shows them no mercy. If someone had sent out twenty men to bring him down then that man lost valuable help. Harry took no prisoners and there were no survivors. His description has been known in many lands for a long time now; there are few places he can go without someone trying to make a name for themselves by facing him.” Ginny listen to every word the Sun Yi said without interruption and if she was honest with herself she would have to admit that she was now frightened of Harry as well. Sensing Ginny’s unconscious fears, Sun Yi sought to comfort her.

“Do not fear young lady, Harry has never harmed an innocent. He has killed many, but always in defense of himself or others. By the way, he spoke of being less bitter, do you know of how he released this burden of his?” He asked curiously.

“Hmm. Oh, he finally confronted those that he feels betrayed him.” At this revelation the old man paled considerably so she quickly went on. “Not like that, he just told them what he felt of them. That probably would have been enough by it’s self with the anger that radiated off of him but adding that with the fact that we had all just witnessed him destroy fifty dark wizards on his own added to the impact of all that he said to us.” She said sadly.

“I am glad that he has finally released himself of that burden. Anger eats away at a man until only a monster remains. I must admit that I feared Harry would walk this path. Although he is feared in most corners of this world, he is greatly loved by many within the walls of this city. And he in turn loves this city. It seems to have a calming effect for him. He has returned many times just to walk the streets for a few hours while getting his thoughts in order. Everyone needs time to reflect upon themselves, it does some good in more ways then one, especially with one in Harry’s unique position.”

When finished the two were drawn into silence for quite some time going over their own thoughts and feelings of the matter. After about an hour Harry returned looking much better and he seemed to be at peace with himself. Harry sat in a chair across from Ginny and Sun Yi had left to give them time to talk but neither seemed to know what to say. Finally Harry said something.

“Well I finished what I had to do here. Actually it was much easier than I thought it would be.”

“What exactly did you have to do?” Ginny asked curiously.

“I had to arrange the marriage of two people who’s line will eventually lead to Cho Chang whose great grandfather defeats some upstart Dark Lord that had the potential to be very dangerous. Then I had to sober a man up. He will be the first Chinese Minister of Magic.” Harry finished in an off hand manner as if he were talking about the weather.

“Oh!” Was all Ginny could say as they lapsed back into silence. After a few minutes Ginny broke the silence with a question she had been wondering about for awhile.

“Harry how many people know about who you really are? I mean people from the past?” It was not until after she had asked that she realized that it might be a question that could upset him so she watched him with growing animosity. Harry thought about this question for a moment before answering.

“No one knows the whole truth. For instance, no one knows that I’m really from the future or that I am a Phoenix Lord. But other than that Sun Yi knows most of it as well as a sorceress named Dora that I met in America. I got sloppy one day and was arrested for witchcraft. She was locked up as well and the guards were in the process of trying to get her to recant her ‘evil’ ways.

I had heard enough after about thirty seconds and blasted the doors off of my cell. I stunned the guards and pulled her out. She seemed about ready to give up so I told her if we got out then I would give her a big kiss. She found that amusing. Then again she

found many things amusing, even her own clumsiness. The next four years we learned as much as we could about magic from each other. It was Dora that showed me how to create my potions chamber. She was one of the best friends I have ever had.”

“Have you ever gone back to see her?” Ginny was a little surprised that she did not feel jealous as she did when Harry was seeing Cho the year before.

“No. By the time I was able to get around to it she had already started her ‘other’ life. So I did not have a name or anything to go by when searching for her in Forge’s well. And I refuse to go back to meet someone in between different times I have seen them. It would be too confusing having memories of conversations and actions that to that, person’s perspective, hadn’t happened yet.” This answer only served to confuse Ginny.

“Um, what do you mean by ‘other’ life?”

“You see Sorcerers and mages have indefinite life spans as long as they are not killed by unnatural means. So they use illusions to make themselves appear to grow older. Then when they feel like it they create a sort of lifeless replica of their bodies and leave it in their bed and they disappear to start another life somewhere else while everyone thinks that they have died.”

“Oh, so I guess that is probably what we will end up doing?” Harry confirmed this with a nod. “Well why do they do this? I mean people know about sorcerers so why do they hide?”

“Ginny you have to understand that our brand of magic and theirs is different. In some respects they can do many things that witches and wizards can not do. It is the same as hiding the magical world from muggles because they would want magical solutions to their problems. Well sorcerers and mages do not reveal themselves for the same reason as well as the fact that the Ministry still has standing orders to kill any sorcerer or mage on sight. Most people, even today are still terrified of their power. There is also the factor that some things are meant to be done by certain people. Like I am meant to defeat Voldemort just as Dumbledore was meant to defeat Grindewald(I have no idea how to spell that name so just bare with me). But if Merlin, Godric Gryffindor or the other founders were still around the people would pressure them to take care of any threats instead of rising to the occasion in the moment needed themselves.”

“Ok I think I understand. I just don’t like the idea of having to hide who I am!” Ginny said exasperated. Harry on the other hand was the complete opposite. The thought of hiding who he truly was, was no problem for him. It was actually quite appealing to him. The problem for him was living with what he had seen and what he had done. Not to mention those things he had yet to see and do.

The future terrified him greatly. He knew that he could handle Voldemort but his successor was a different story. He had yet to learn who he truly was but like Tom Riddle he had chosen another name for himself. He was much more powerful than Voldemort and his cruelty and hatred knew no bounds. Those that would follow him, will not follow out of greed or lust for power but out of fear for their lives. They will

follow for the right to live as well as to inflict pain upon others.

This is the future that Harry has seen and he knew that this was the future that was coming. Lord Maul was coming, and he did not know if he could stop him. Harry sat there for quite some time, he did not know how long, rolling these thoughts through his head. He was thinking of all the people he had met during his many years and wondered about their fates. Had they lived peaceful lives or had they been torn apart by anger, hatred or violence. He was pulled from these thoughts however by Ginny, who was kneeling beside his chair.

“Harry, are you alright?” She sounded concerned but Harry didn’t know why until he realized he had tears running down his face. He quickly wiped them off avoiding Ginny’s eyes. “Harry what’s wrong.”

“Nothing I just....” He was cut off from saying anything else as Ginny’s lips met his. He was shocked to say the least when she pulled back a minute later

“Sorry, I figured you needed something else to occupy your mind for the moment so you could stop brooding.” After Harry gave no reply, just sat there in dumbstruck silence, Ginny began to blush under his wide eyed gaze. A few moments later he shook his head a bit and his mind began to function once again.

“Well, um, thank you for that. For distracting me I mean. Yeah, that’s it. So we better get back and start your training. The others should be acquainted with their companions and by now Albus should have finished that book and Merlin should have instructed him in using the staff. So let’s go see Sun Yi and get going.” Harry said nervously then he and Ginny quickly made their way out of the sitting room, refusing to look the other in the eye as they made their way through the many corridors to say goodbye to the elderly emperor.

Chapter Fifteen: A Problem with Trust and Patience

“Damn Harry, back already? What happened and how many this time?” Forge said when Harry and Ginny appeared near him.

“Nothing happened and no one is dead, it just took less time than I thought.” He replied, shaking his head at Forge. “You make it sound like I leave a trail of corpses everywhere I go.”

“Well don’t you?” He said with a smile.

“You know sometimes you are impossible to talk to. Where is everyone else?”

“Well that strange girl is off somewhere with the unicorn, Albus is reading yet another book and ummm, Neville is chatting with the dragon. Hearing that is kind of disconcerting really. Hearing you talk to snakes is one thing but hearing those roars coming out of a human is just disturbing.” Forge informed Harry with a chill running down his back.

“How many books can he possibly have gone through by now?” Ginny asked curiously.

“Well Gin we were gone only one day but here any number of days could have gone by, so he’s probably read a few.”

“A few?” Forge laughed. “Hell that man has been reading non stop since he finished training with Merlin. He has already gone through my entire library and he was half way through yours when I raised your wards on him. He was rather shocked when he was blasted out of the room. That man just seems to absorb knowledge. I have never seen anything like it. Well except for you.” He finished pointing at Harry.

“Ok everyone, we need to get started on your training so we will start right now.” Harry informed them as they were sitting down for dinner that night. “Ginny, Luna, Neville, take out your swords!” The three of them looked between each other in confusion at the request. Well it was actually an order so they did as they were told. When they each held their weapons in their hands Harry raised his hand and each blade had reduced to the size of a large dagger.

“From now until I tell you otherwise, while taking your meals you will use no utensils other than the dagger you hold in your hand. No forks, no spoons. You will use these weapons at every possible moment until you can not tell the difference between the flesh of your hand to the steel of the blade.” Harry’s demeanor had changed so quickly that the others, Dumbledore included, could not believe that this was the same Harry that they had been talking and joking with just moments before. The usual jovial face of Forge now mirrored the same seriousness and intensity that Harry’s showed.

“Tomorrow Forge and I will begin to train you in wandless magic. It may take some time but until you master it that will occupy the majority of your time. When I feel you have mastered it completely we will begin working on your hand to hand combat skills. You will be trained in just about anything you can think of. You will do what we say when we say, no questions asked, no bitching or moaning. You just do it.”

“Now when you are finished here you will be sent out to research anything and everything that can help you survive the battles that are to come. You will study with everyone that will teach you. You may have to deceive some and lie about your true intentions but it must be done. And yes this includes delving into the dark arts. Your bloodline and the knowledge you learn before hand will help prevent the dark from invading your very spirit but in the end it is your own choices that will save you from this fate. You will study for as long as need be. Don’t feel rushed to do everything at once. Just try not to be as flamboyant as Grampa Harry here.” Harry scowled at Forge’s last statement while the others with the exception of Ginny looked on in confusion. With that finished they had started supper which was rather amusing seeing the three young heirs trying to figure out how to use their daggers to eat stew.

/BACK AT HOGWARTS/

Snape had gathered all that Harry had asked to explain what was going to happen. In the Headmaster’s office sat all the members of the Order as well as the DA, all

looking confused as to why they were there.

“Alright now many of you may know of Potter’s ability at speaking with others in their minds.” When Snape was met with many nods and even more shocked expressions he continued. “Alright, the night that Potter showed up and turned everything upside down at that meeting in the Phoenix Hall, or whatever he called it, I was summoned to Lord Voldemort. Just before I left Potter came up with something rather interesting. He decided to take up residence in my mind for the meeting with the Death Eaters. At this point Voldemort still had questions about my loyalty to him so we had to change that.” Snape went on to tell them about the meeting as well as the conversation he had with Harry in the forest. Everyone found the information about what Salazar Slytherin was really like quite shocking.

“Now, right before Potter left last night he gave me some rather strange instructions. I was to inform the Dark Lord of his departure as well as goad him into such a rage that he would attack Hogwarts while they were gone.” At this there was an outcry of panic that Professor Snape felt he should put a stop to it real quick. “Silence! Now, Voldemort believes them to be gone until Monday so he ordered me to prepare for his arrival Sunday evening.”

“But that is when Harry and the others will be back!” Hermione said in confusion.

“Granger, for someone that is extremely intelligent you are also incredibly dense. Potter plans to draw Voldemort and as many of his supporters as possible out into the open. An attack on Hogwarts is just that opportunity. Now he was able to decimate a force of over three hundred Death Eaters single handedly in St. Petersburg. If any of the others turn out to be half as good as him Voldemort will no longer be of any importance to anyone other than the worms that will feast on his corpse. Plus we also have Potter’s allies in the forest. All in all Sunday will prove to be very fruitless for the dark forces.” The potions master finished with a grin.

“No disrespect meant Professor but how in the hell did Harry convince you to push Voldemort into a rage while you were alone with him?” When Cho voiced this question she and everyone else were surprised when a dreamy look came over Snape as if he were looking at a new born baby. If Snape liked kids that is.

“Well while he was gone Potter became quite the student of potions. He created himself the most magnificent potions chamber I had ever seen. It is sort of like one of the damn trunks that can lead to whole rooms. But small enough to carry around in your pocket. So he simply offered to make me one and I left immediately.” The professor finished with that same dreamy grin, looking off into space. The site of the ‘evil potions master’ happy was really disturbing to all those present.

“Ok but what allies does Harry have in the forest?” Tonks asked.

“Well all I know of is the Centaurs, Unicorns as well as a herd of Acromantula and Hagrid’s brother Grawp.” Snape answered. Ron visible flinched at the mention of the Acromantula.

“Ok, so we will have to move the Aurors in here quietly over the next twenty four

hours or so to give us some more fighters.” Professor McGonagall suggested.

“Wrong!” Everyone turned toward the direction of the four illusions to see ‘Harry’ looking back at them intently.

“I thought you said that those were illusions.” Mrs. Weasley said looking very confused.

“We are illusions. We just happen to be as intelligent as the one that created us, so I have all the knowledge of Harry’s plans for tomorrow night. Now as for the Aurors. Moving them into Hogwarts would be a very bad idea due to Voldemort’s followers inside of the school. I know who they are but that is not the only complication. Someone else also has followers inside of the school but thus far Harry has been unable to discover all of their identities. He has been able to find who is loyal to the light easy enough but there is a very large grey area. I am happy to say everyone in this room is loyal. So instead we will need as many Aurors as possible stationed at Azkaban. The Dementors will be moved out tomorrow morning and take up position in the western part of the forest.”

“Dementors! Harry can not honestly believe that those things can be trusted on Hogwarts grounds!” This argument was voiced primarily by the Professors and ministry personnel as most of the students and many others trusted Harry’s judgment.

“Yes as a matter of fact I do honestly believe they will behave themselves.”

“And how can you say that? You are intelligent yes but you are still an illusion!” Snapped a rather pompous looking Ravenclaw. He found the idea of an illusion with a mind insulting.

“Illusion? What illusion?” When everyone was equally dumbstruck He continued. “Sorry to interrupt this interesting discussion but I felt that now was a good time to show up.” With that said Sirius approached him, surveying him quizzically.

“Harry is that the real you or some dumb joke?” He asked as his eyes danced with mischief.

“Yes it is. Now about the Dementors. Like many others they are my allies, the other day I signed control of Azkaban back to the ministry but the Dementors are still loyal to me. They will follow every command I give them and not one will step inside of the walls of Hogwarts. Some of you may have forgotten but the Dementors were ‘created’ by wizards. They were created to be among the foulest beings to walk the earth, to guard the foulest wizards to walk the earth. With the Death Eaters on the grounds they will pay no attention to those inside the school.”

“Harry how did you know what we were discussing before you showed up?”

“Hermione as I told Snape last night, ‘my eyes are everywhere and they are always open’.” At this time Molly Weasley jumped out of her chair and rushed him nearly crushing him in a fierce hug.

“How is Ginny and the others?” She asked with tears filling her eyes.

“She is alright though I have not spoken to the others in several years. Their studying.” He said with a grin.

“Several years! I thought they were with you?” If looks could kill.

“Mrs. Weasley calm down they are fine but this part of their training they have to do alone and it will take them a very long time. But don’t worry if any of them get into serious trouble I will know about it.” Molly visibly relaxed after this but then another question entered her mind.

“Um Harry how long as she been away?”

“I don’t think I should answer that, women are very touchy about their age. Then again so am I.” This last comment was added as an afterthought but the answer did not seem to satisfy her.

“Harry James Potter how long?” The sheer intensity of her voice made everyone even Harry fall out of their chairs. Harry thought for a moment, thinking about Ginny’s reaction to them knowing her ‘true age’ and decided it was worth it.

“Three hundred and twenty two years.”

“Ginny is going to kill you Harry!” ‘Ginny’ said with a smile on her face.

“WHAT!” Now Harry had every Weasley present bearing down on him.

“Sorry he’s gone now. Though I pity him when Ginny finds out that he told you. But what comes around goes around.” ‘Harry’ said with a grin.

“What do you mean by that?” Nearly everyone asked.

“Oh when they first left She pressured Harry into telling her how old he really was. To say it shocked her is an understatement, even though he lied about it. But after she got over that she teased him to no end and even got the others in on it.” He chuckled.

“So how old is Harry? Or are you touchy about your age?” Sirius asked with a grin.

“Touchy? Hell no, I’m only three days old what do I have to be touchy about. But ok let me do the math real quick.” He made quite a display of counting off his fingers before answering with a wide grin. “He should now be somewhere around two millennia or so.”

“Traitor!” Came a shout from the other side of the room. Everyone turned to see a fuming Harry Potter.

“What can I say I have to have a little fun. By the way people, if I were you I would not follow the others example and tease him unless you what to follow in their footsteps of retribution. Grampa Harry here has developed quite a temper.” ‘Harry’

Said with a good bit of theatrics.

“Shut it you! And all of you, you would do well to heed his warning on that particular subject.”

“What, you told them of Mrs. Virginia’s age but now you get all pissy when they know yours. You have double standards for just about everything don’t you.”

“Now don’t even start that again or you will regret it!” Harry said through clenched teeth.

“This is by far the most bazaar thing I have ever seen!” The others could only nod at Remus’s statement. But then something clicked in his mind and he jumped out of his seat.

“HARRY!” He shouted a little louder than he meant to.

“WHAT?” Bellowed two very angry Harrys.

“You, um, how do I say this....”

“Spit it out!” Both of them yelled.

“Ok you were able to travel to the past to do some of your training and studying right?” When the real Harry nodded he continued. “You were at Hogwarts with us weren’t you?” When he said this Harry’s face brightened and showed amusement.

“Why yes I was my dear Moony!” He replied with a very overstated bow.

“Ok, what’s going on now?” Ron asked.

“That is simple Mr. Weasley. In our sixth year there was a transfer student named Harry Clark. He became very close friends with the Marauders and Lilly but he disappeared after graduation. Well anyway Harry Clark is really Harry Potter. I am surprised it took you that long to figure it out Moony.” Sirius finished with a devilish grin.

“You knew? Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because Moony old buddy old pal, I wanted to see how far your observational skills had slipped. Hell in school you seemed to figure everything out very quickly but now you are getting old.” Everyone seemed to be enjoying the light hearted banter, well everyone that is except Snape who was seething.

“Potter, mark my words. You will pay for all that...” But Snape was cut off as Harry extended his arm. In his hand he held a very small wooden box. At the sight of it Snape turned almost childlike with anticipation. Harry placed the box on the floor and with a wave of his hand it began to grow forcing many to abandon their chairs. When it stopped nearly the entire wall was now covered by massive doors.

“Um, Harry what is that?” Hermione asked.

“That is Snape’s new potions chamber.” With this said Snape burst through the doors with everyone else following close behind. Everyone stared in wonder. Their reactions were just the same as Ginny’s had been when Harry first showed her his. “As I promised Professor there are copies of every book on potions I have compiled. I also charmed the cases so that they automatically replenish themselves since most of these ingredients can’t be found anymore. Everything in here is self-cleaning and I have charmed the books so that the information will just sort of jump into your mind while reading so that you can learn all of the potions as soon as possible.” Harry finished while Snape seemed to be dancing around oblivious to those around him.

“Harry how were you able to create this?” Tonks asked him.

“Oh well a friend of mine from way back, she taught me how to do all of this. She was absolutely brilliant when we weren’t busy teasing each other for one thing or another.” He answered sadly. “I really miss her.” He mumbled but a few had heard him but did not mention it. He did not notice however as Tonks was watching him intently.

Finally, when they were able to pull Snape out of his new found haven, Harry left again claiming he had things to do but everyone could tell that he suddenly seemed very depressed.

“Ok, so where were we before we were so rudely interrupted. Ah yes the attack.” ‘Harry’ began.

“Yes Professor Snape, do you know what kind of a force we are looking at?” Minister Weasley asked getting to the point.

“I am not in position to know of the preparations. My only purpose in the dark lord’s plans now is to make sure that communications to the outside world are cut off in time for the attack. Potter here has all the necessary information.”

“Alright, so Harry what are we looking at here?”

“Oh I’d say about two thousand Death Eaters, give or take, and an assortment of dark creatures including, Chimaeras, Lethifolds, Basilisks and Dragons make up the bulk of Voldemort’s forces.” ‘Harry’ was immediately interrupted by many shouts of protests.

“How could we possibly fight off such a force with the Aurors away?”

“You could not honestly believe we could win!”

“Are you insane?”

“Harry with such a force why have the Aurors held up in Azkaban?” Ron asked.

“Because Voldemort’s forces are not the only ones out there. Right now there are over

four hundred Death Eaters in Azkaban. When the attack on the school begins there will also be an attack on the prison. This dark wizard calls himself Lord Maul and he is looking for more followers. He has already taken a good chunk out of Voldemort's own inner circle but he has not noticed because Lord Maul is a member of the inner circle. He has been a long time supporter of Voldemort but feels that his obsession with Harry has made him weak. He looks to replace Voldemort real soon."

"Well if we can beat Voldemort this guy should be a push over in comparison." Dean Thomas suggested confidently.

"Never underestimate an unknown enemy. If he has been clever enough to hide the identities of his followers in Hogwarts from Harry then he is more intelligent than Voldemort." Tonks snapped. Mad eye Moody looked on proudly at the young auror.

"Tonks is right. Voldemort is completely insane. He has no doubt that he can win. He will not even think of the possibility of losing anymore. This makes him easy to manipulate and deceive. Lord Maul is completely different in almost every respect. He knows he could lose. So he is careful and will not throw men away in a hopeless battle. He is not burdened down with an enflamed ego or pride. He is cold, calculating and methodical. Harry recently discovered that it was in fact Lord Maul that raised the demons on the grounds last night which shows that he is willing to take very big chances to get an edge."

"But Harry beat his Demon Lord easy so he couldn't be all that powerful could he?" Hannah Abbott asked hopefully.

"No. One's ability to control the spirits does not have anything to do with how powerful you are magically. Many of the most powerful magicians would be considered muggles or squibs. What gives him most of his power is his uncanny ability to instill fear into a person's mind. Now most people fear Voldemort but would not join or aid him in any way. But most of Lord Maul's followers are just like any of you. They come from many different backgrounds and were among all four houses in school. They could be your best friends or even your family. They follow him because they are too terrified not to. Back when Voldemort first came to power everyone was scared, not knowing who to trust. Well this time it will be worse. The only upside is that Lord Maul knows who and what Harry really is and knows of all the things he has done through legends and myths. And he is terrified of him. But there is a downside as well. Harry has seen some of what is to come and it filled him with a sense of fear so powerful that he can hardly contain it." 'Harry' finished somberly.

Everyone sat in silence as they digested all of this information and all present wondered what could possibly be coming that would scare Harry of all people. So they sat in silence until Hermione asked something that caught everyone by surprise.

"What legends?" She was immediately bombarded by confused looks. She then turned to 'Harry' and elaborated. "You said that this Lord Maul knows what Harry really is and his abilities from legends and myths. What did you mean?" Everyone then turned to 'Harry' for an explanation and he began to look very nervous.

"Well what you have to understand about that is that Harry did what he did because it

was necessary, not because he enjoyed it or anything.” After taking a few minutes to come up with a way to explain this lightly he began to explain the facts of the matters in question. Everyone had gone ghostly white immediately and by the end many felt as if they would throw up and some actually did. They could see plainly why someone would be terrified of him and were glad that they were not facing him. After composing themselves they got back down to the business at hand.

For the next few hours they sat around discussing and outlining the strategies for the coming battle. It was nearing three a.m. when several Gryfindors climbed through the portrait hole into the common room. None of them expected to get any sleep that night but were surprised to be met by an empty common room with the exception of a severe looking Madam Pomfrey with a load of dreamless sleep potion.

“Now you will each take goblet and go straight to bed. From what I understand I will have my hands full tonight and I don’t want anyone in there because they got careless from lack of sleep.” Her tone left no room for debate and it was also clear that she did not approve of involving children. Everyone picked up a goblet and made their way quickly to their dorms. “You stay!” She said while pointing a threatening at ‘Harry’. When everyone else had left Madam Pomfrey rounded on ‘Harry’.

“So I am assuming that this whole attack is your doing?” She asked coolly. She was met by a very amused look.

“No, this was not my doing. It was Harry’s!” The overbearing healer now looked as if she were about to burst out in tears. She began pacing around ranting trying to keep her tears at bay.

“My god, it has finally happened! The boy has already been through so much now this. Injuries and wounds I can fix up in my sleep but this is too much.” And she went on and on and on. ‘Harry’ was amused at first but when he noticed she was crying he decided to put a stop to her rant.

“Madam Pomfrey calm down. I’m not Harry and he is not crazy, well maybe he is but that is beside the point.” At this confession he suddenly had a very pissed off matron bearing down on him.

“Well then who are you and where is he?” She bellowed.

“He is not here obviously. He is busy training the Headmaster as well as Mr. Longbottom, Mrs. Weasley and Mrs. Lovegood. But don’t worry they will be back just before the show begins. As for who I am, myself and the others I just mentioned are illusions that Harry placed here when they left Friday night. Now as for patients, with luck you will not have very many.” He said.

“Um, ok I will just leave you to do whatever it is that illusions do.” She said and walked to the portrait hole looking over her shoulder a couple of times before she left. She was decidedly confused and felt a headache coming on.

The following morning proceeded very slowly for many within Hogwarts. With the fight coming closer tensions were running high for all those trusted with the

information. However there were those that were in very high spirits. Draco Malfoy for example. He grew increasingly more smug as the day progressed and never missed an opportunity to harass those he felt were beneath him. Including those in the DA. Which turned out to be a very bad idea when he came across Ron, Hermione and 'Harry'.

"Well what do we have here?" Came a drawling voice from behind the trio. The three turned to see Malfoy standing at the head of a group of six other Slytherins.

"Mudblood, Weasel and the imitation Potty." He added the last in a low whisper. Ron and Hermione looked shocked and a little scared. 'Harry' on the other hand tried to look pensive but had a hard time keeping a smile off his face.

"What are you talking about Malfoy?" Hermione asked trying to sound confused.

"Oh I think you know what I'm talking about!" The slimy git responded. He then leaned in close to 'Harry' and whispered into his ear. "I know what you are!" To his surprise a smile greeted him when he pulled back.

"Really! Do you know what he is?" 'Harry' said pointing past the group of Slytherins. The group quickly spun on their heel to find the real Harry standing tall behind them. Malfoy and some of the others reached for their wands but found nothing short of pocket lint. Turning their attention back to Harry they found their wands in his out stretched hand with a wicked gleam in his eyes.

While the Slytherins watched him with growing apprehension he removed the familiar small wooden box from the pocket of his robes. After the doors reached their full size Harry opened the doors showing a room that looked very much like the dungeons of Hogwarts.

"Alright, get in!"

"Are you insane Potter? You can't order us around!" Malfoy spoke up defiantly. This response only seemed to amuse Harry. With a quick wave of his hand the Slytherins began marching through the doors into the chamber beyond. It was a long stone corridor with doors lining each wall spaced out every ten feet or so. As they entered shouts could be heard from many demanding to be released which did not make the new prisoners feel any better about the situation. Among the many shouts was the demand to know why they were in here.

"Now that you are all here I think it is time for you to know why you have been brought here. Well that is simple! With Voldemort on his way here I don't feel like having to look over my shoulder for his supporters within the castle. So I will deal with your master then I will come back and deal with you. Have a pleasant afternoon." And with that said he walked back to the door with shocked angry shouts filling the air.

"How many of those doors do you have?" Ron asked after Harry had shrunk the door and returned it to his pocket.

"Only one but it goes to different places depending on what I need. Now we need to

get busy. We have about two and a half hours. I need to gather all of the first through third years together and tuck them away where they will be safe. There isn't any among them that have any strong feelings about Voldemort, one way or the other, so they should be safe by themselves."

"Harry you can't leave them alone! What if something happens?" Hermione asked in a serious tone.

"Nothing is going to happen to them Hermione. I am going to put them in the Hall of the Phoenix. That way if anything happens to me one of the others can get them out again. We are the only ones that can open it so it is the safest place for them. But Mrs. Weasley and your parents are going to be with them." They walked through the many secret passageways heading toward the Gryffindor common room in silence for a few moments until Ron spoke up.

"Harry where is Ginny?" He was obviously concerned so Harry decided not to hide what she was doing.

"Right now her and Professor Dumbledore should be moving the Dementors and Acromantula into position. Luna is working with the unicorns and centaurs with Hagrid and Neville should be taking care of the dragons now." Harry informed his two best friends in an offhand manner as if he was speaking of everyday things. Due to being in the lead Harry did not notice Ron's face go red with anger.

"You have my little sister dealing with those monsters?" He all but shouted.

"Well technically you are her little brother now. But anyway don't worry about her she could destroy everyone of them if she had to. Besides Albus is with her." Harry responded without faltering in his step or even looking back.

"Harry did you say Neville was dealing with the dragons? Aren't they with Voldemort?" Hermione thought it was a legitimate question but all it did was make Harry laugh.

"Not for long. When Neville is done with them they will be lining up for a chance to get at some Death Eaters." He said with a chuckle. They soon came up to the portrait of the fat lady which hid the entrance to the Gryffindor common room and Harry stopped to look back at his two friends.

"Um, what's the password?" Ron and Hermione looked at each other with a grin before they both spoke.

"Victory!" They climbed through the portrait hole into a very crowded and loud common room. It seemed like nearly every Gryffindor was there which made Harry's work a lot easier. From the entrance he made straight for the coffee table in front of the fire place.

Standing on the table Harry called for everyone's attention and the noise quickly died down. "Alright I want all of the first through third years to please move over to the portrait hole. We are going to go on a little walk. So please step over." The younger

students moved over the entrance with a mixture of confusion and animosity showing on their faces. When they were all gathered Harry asked Hermione to take them out into the corridor and wait for him. Harry waited for the portrait to close before he begun again.

“Alright we don’t have much time so I will make this quick. Voldemort will launch an attack on the school in just over two hours.” When Harry said this he was expecting to see panic but was pleasantly surprised to see the vast majority had looks of utter determination on their faces. They were scared yes but also unwavering in their ideals. “I have taken all of his allies inside the school to a secure place until this is over. All I need to know right now is are you willing to fight. If not you will follow me while I take the younger students to a safe place. If you wish to fight go and wait in the Great Hall while I gather everyone together. I will wait for anyone who does not wish to fight outside for five minutes everyone else head down to the Great Hall.” The common room burst with conversation when Harry left. He did not hear much but what he heard was positive. After a few minutes students began to pour out of the common room but not one stopped to join the younger students.

“Alright everyone, let’s go!” Harry said as he began to lead the young Gryffindors to the Headmaster’s office. It took only a matter of minutes to reach the stone gargoyle that guarded Dumbledore’s office and the students were amazed as it moved aside with a tap from Harry’s sword. As they were making their way up the stairs Harry heard Hermione tell them that they were going to the Headmaster’s office and not to touch anything. This of course only brought on more questions such as why they were going. But these questions were cut short upon their arrival in the spacious office where Dumbledore was waiting for them.

“Ah, you are here already. I would have thought you would have had more trouble! Them being Gryffindors and all.” He said kindly confusing the young students quite a bit.

“I didn’t give them a choice in the matter! Albus can you take them down and explain everything to them while I get all the others?”

“Certainly Harry. Now could all of you follow me please and I will explain everyth.....” Harry did not hear any more than that as Ron, Hermione and himself rushed out of the office to gather the youngest of the other houses.

Harry now stood at the head of the Great Hall explaining what was going on and what was going to happen to all of those that had decided to stay and fight. While briefing everyone Harry was slightly surprised to see quite a few Slytherins but reminded himself that not everyone in that house is a dark wizard. He believed the absence of Draco Malfoy probably had a lot to do with it. After all he was not there to threaten anyone who might be thinking of helping Harry. The revelation that Harry was Heir to Slytherin as well as Gryffindor shocked nearly all present that had not been previously informed. Due to Lord Maul already knowing and many students seeing what he could do, he even explain about being a Phoenix Lord. He also told them of Lord Maul for two reasons.

ONE- They needed to know

TWO- He wanted to gauge the reactions of those present to see who could be a supporter of his.

At 5:30 Harry dismissed everyone to their posts after a quick early dinner. Most were sent to the battlements or were stationed in the entrance hall.

Professor Flitwick, who was a dueling master, was in charge of those in the entrance hall, which was most of the students from Ravenclaw and Slytherin though there were some from the other house. Gryffindor and Hufflepuff made up the bulk of those on the battlements where Professor McGonagall was in charge. The professors and ministry personnel were evenly distributed around the other critical areas.

Harry made his way across the battlements where students and adults alike were getting ready for battle. They sat on the floor out of sight with their backs against the stone wall facing out on to the grounds, each in their own way preparing for what was coming. As he looked upon their faces he felt a deep sting in his heart at the thought of these young people being forced to grow up way too soon, forced to fight a war. The looks on their faces were sorrowful but concentration was chiseled deep into their features and Harry knew that they would do what was needed. He looked around and spotted a familiar face and made his way over.

“How are you doing Colin?” He asked the boy that seemed ready to drop everything and run. Being spoken to so suddenly made the boy jump where he sat before he realized who was speaking.

“I’m alright. Just scared to death. I guess I am not as brave as you. But I am going to stay here and help all I can.” He said this with so much conviction that it made Harry smile.

“Colin being brave does not mean that you are without fear. Being brave means that you know what is at stake, you know there is the possibility that you could lose but you fight on because it is the right thing to do. Just the fact that you were able to come up here to fight speaks a lot about your character. Don’t short change yourself by comparing yourself to others and think that they are better than you. Just be yourself alright!” When Harry had finished Colin was smiling and felt a lot better.

“Thanks Harry.” Harry pat him on the shoulder and moved down the line to where Sirius and Remus were sitting arguing about something or another.

“Hey guys.” He said as he sat against the wall. They immediately stopped arguing and turned to Harry.

“Harry, that prank we pulled on Snape in seventh year, was it me or Remus that thought of it?”

“Which prank would that be Sirius? There were quite a few.”

“The one where he turned into a yellow pig every half hour for two days. That was mine right?” Sirius asked just waiting for Harry to prove him right so he could rub it

in Remus's face.

"I believe that was the only prank that my mum came up while I was there!" Harry replied looking thoughtful.

"Lilly! She never helped us with any pranks." Sirius nearly shouted.

"Actually Padfoot, now that I think about it, it was Lilly. Remember that was right after Snape slipped that laxative into James's goblet and Lilly drank from it to. She was in an awfully bad mood after that." Remus informed him with a smile on his face.

"Alright Harry everything is set up!" Harry turned his attention from the marauders to see Ginny and the other heirs standing before him. Both Ginny and Luna looked completely different. They were no longer the young teenage girls that they were before they left. They were now full grown and carried a sense of power about them that clearly said 'don't screw with me'. Neville too had changed. No more was the chubby awkward boy that everyone knew. In his place stood a man over six feet tall, a few inches shorter than Harry, with chiseled features and blue eyes that radiated strength. And Dumbledore looked, well like Dumbledore.

"Ginny you better go see Ron, he's right down there. He's been threatening me since I got back. Your dad is also up here somewhere." As Ginny headed down the battlements Harry turned to the others.

"So did any of you have any trouble?" Neville was the first to answer with a little lopsided grin.

"Any trouble I had will be nothing in comparison to when I see my grandmother again. I may have some trouble convincing her that I am me." He replied with a little laugh.

"Harry we have been looking for you!" Harry looked up to see Fred and George approaching.

"We had nothing better to do so."

"George and I came to help. And look who we found on our way here." They both stepped aside to reveal none other than Percy who looked incredibly ashamed. As soon as Harry spotted him he began to stammer as if not knowing what to say.

"Harry I, I don't know, well I'm really sorry Harry I don't know why I did all of what I did." He continued on for a few minutes until Harry cut him off.

"Percy calm down! Ok, you worked at the ministry. You thought that they were right. Fudge certainly tried as hard as he could to make me look crazy. But right now isn't the time. We only have a few minutes so let me give you a run down of what is going to happen." Harry explained their plan quickly and answered any questions that they had. After a few minutes Ginny noticed her three brothers and quickly made her way over to them.

“Fred, George, Percy!” The three in question spun around just in time to be enveloped into a very tight hug. After being released the three stepped back to look at the girl in confusion. It took a few seconds but finally it dawned on them who she was.

“Ginny?” They all asked not believing their eyes.

“Well who else would it be?” She asked with a mischievous gleam in her eye.

“Oh....My....God!” Now coming from the twins this kind of reaction would be normal but Percy’s reaction was exactly the same. “What the hell happened to you?”

“I grew up, that’s what! If you think I look different you should see Neville!” She said with a small laugh. All her brothers could do was gape at her.

“Harry what the hell did you do to my sister?” Coming up from the other side of the battlements was Ron and he did not look Happy.

“I didn’t do anything to her and now is not the time for this. Everyone get down, they should be here any minute!” Harry sat in a little nook where he could peer out over the grounds without worrying about being seen. Darkness had crept its way over the grounds half an hour ago so everything seemed drowned in shadows but this did not impair his vision. He could see the edge of the forest perfectly clear and could hear moving around back into the trees. Harry held his breath as he caught sight of movement and let it out when more and more could be seen. His original assessment had been that about two thousand Death Eaters would participate in the attack. He now believed that there was many, many more.

Chapter Sixteen: The Attack

Harry scanned the edge of the forest and quickly began thinking his plan through. It could still work if everything goes as planned, with a few alterations. Scanning down the line of students and teachers his eyes stopped on Ginny.

‘Ginny we have to change a few details.’ She had grown so accustomed to hearing Harry and the others in her mind that she hardly distinguished between verbal and mental speech. ‘I need you to go take charge down stairs and get ready for the front doors to be breeched.’ Ginny was shocked at first but a quick look at Harry explained everything to her and a very large grin appeared on her face before she vanished.

“Potter, there appears to be more Death Eaters in the forest than you originally thought!” Snape sneered as he, Sirius and Remus made their way to his position. Though his tone towards Harry was still condescending it no longer carried very much bite.

“You think? There seems to be twice as many, he must have brought some in from overseas. The dark creatures seem to be what I thought but those extra Death Eaters are a problem! A small problem that Ginny is preparing to remedy. Go down the line and tell everyone not to fire until I say. This is VERY important so leave no room for arguments or excuses!”

The three made their way down the battlements stressing the importance of following every order from Harry no matter how stupid it sounded. This last part came mostly from Snape but it was said more out of habit than out of any real dislike for Harry. Many watched Harry as he surveyed the empty grounds below as if he were the grounds keeper. He took in every last detail as he scanned from the gates to the lake. From the lake to the western part of the forest then back again. The whole process took only a few moments but he had memorized every rise, every shrub and every ditch.

After detailing the landscape Harry waved his right hand at the towers on either side of the battlements. Everyone looked to see what he was doing but there only seemed to be a shimmer, a ripple in the air, then nothing. Confused they just turned back to what they were doing or to their own thoughts. They could easily here the enemy building up at the forests edge and it was more than a little disconcerting. They were scared, terrified would be a better word, they were not ready to fight a war. But they had volunteered to be here and they would be damned if they ran away. And they sure as hell were not going to let the Death Eaters come in and start killing their classmates. But the waiting....suddenly all present heard someone below casting charms and curses attempting to open the massive doors of Hogwarts.

/ENTRY HALL

Ginny's sudden appearance in the entry hall made several people jump in surprise and a few even fainted after seeing how much she had changed. She was dressed in tight black leather pants that were loose enough to allow her to move around easily. She wore a leather vest that was cut into a v-neck under which she wore an ordinary cotton tunic. Two daggers protruded from the tops of her dragon hide boots and she had an assortment of others hidden in various places. With Helga Hufflepuff's sword strapped to her back she was the very definition of intimidation. Had they not been informed of everything that had happened they would not have believed it possible that this was the youngest of the Weasley family.

"Alright knock it off with the staring, we have much to do and the plans have been changed. Where is Professor Flitwick?" She asked in a commanding tone that allowed nothing but obedience. Her attention was drawn to the middle of the group where the short professor was attempting to make his way through the crowd after he had revived those that had fainted. After making it through the crowd and straightening up he caught site of Ginny and rushed to the girl.

"Ah Miss Weasley it is so good to have you back. Now, I was wondering if you happen to know how Mr. Potter was able to create those illusions?" Ginny had to keep herself from laughing as the small, but powerful, wizard bounced up and down excitedly.

"I don't know it myself, but it is in one of the books Harry has written! After we are finished here I will steal it from him and make a copy for you to borrow." Her answer both excited and worried the professor.

"Won't he be furious with the two of us if we do that?" Professor Flitwick would do just about anything to learn a new charm but stealing the information was not one of them. Especially not from someone he respected as much as he did Harry. This

answer only seemed to amuse Ginny even more and she began laughing.

“Are you kidding? That is the only way we could get information out of him. If we needed something from his books we had to steal it and it was always harder than the last time. He said it had to do with thinking things through thoroughly. Every time there was a different problem so we needed a different solution.” Ginny looked around at all present and started barking out orders. Her demeanor had changed so rapidly that it scared nearly everyone out of their shoes. Everyone was moving quickly from one place to another. Up and down the stairs to the third floor and back preparing for their new plans to try to counteract Voldemort’s ‘extra’ men.

Everyone thought that it was an excellent plan, well thought out logistically sound. But that did not help quench their fears. With everything set up, everything ready, all that was left to do, was wait....suddenly everyone froze as the sound of curses could be heard impacting the door in an attempt to break it open.

/AZKABAN

Tonks was walking through the halls and long dark corridor of the most feared wizard’s prison in the world and not liking the idea of being there one bit. In her mind she and the rest of the Aurors should be at Hogwarts, helping to defend the students from Voldemort. It was the Dementor’s job to guard these prisoners but since they are now fanatically loyal to Harry Potter, he had decided to use them in some sort a trap for the Death Eaters. So here she was. Bored! They had been told that some upstart Dark Lord was going to use the distraction the attack on Hogwarts would cause to free the imprisoned Death Eaters and recruit them as followers.

She could not help think that this Lord Maul must not be all that powerful if he has to break Death Eaters out of prison to gain followers. But the fact that Harry was worried about him concerned her. Harry always was the worrying kind but this was different. Yes she had been thinking about Harry a great deal lately. Since the meeting the night before, in the Headmasters office, she has had a hard time concentrating on anything else. There was something that was nagging at the very edges of her mind. Harry told them that he had learned to create his various chambers from a friend in the past but what she was thinking was impossible. It had to be.

“Tonks? Are you all right?” Tonks quickly looked up to see Madam Bones looking down at her with a confused and slightly worried expression. Looking around Tonks realized that she was now sitting on the floor, leaning against the wall in one of the corridors.

“Damn I must have been thinking harder than I thought!” She muttered to herself as she stood up. “Yes I’m fine! I just wasn’t paying attention and fell.” Tonks saying this was nothing new of course but her excuse did not seem to convince her boss.

“I have seen you fall many times but I don’t recall ever seeing you fall then move over and lean against the wall without even realizing that you were not still on your feet.” A small smile was playing at her lips but it was obvious that her mind was on other things. “Well come on, Mr. Potter has just sent word that Voldemort’s forces are massing on the edge of the forest. He believes that the attack on the prison will begin

at the same time or just shortly after.” She said this calmly as she helped Tonks to her feet.

“How can you be so calm about this? I mean, your daughter is there. Hell she is probably out there about to help fight. We should be there as well not held up here!”

“Calm down will you! I would much rather be there myself but the fact of the matter is that we serve a better purpose here. A handful of Death Eaters that can produce a patronus could hold off the Dementors long enough to free the prisoners. It will be much harder for them facing three hundred trained Aurors. And as for Hogwarts, you have seen what Potter is capable of! He has trained the others himself, in conditions and in ways that you or I will probably never see much less comprehend. I trust that Potter will keep them all safe and get his opportunity to get Voldemort alone.” They proceeded down the corridor past cells where the prisoners were either insane or had worked out what was going on and felt it was their duty mock the Aurors with threats and sarcastic comments about their impending fates.

/HOGWARTS (battlements)

“Harry if we don’t do something now they are going to get through the doors!” Ernie Macmillan whispered urgently with booming sounds rising from below.

“That is exactly what I want. We had to rework our plan to compensate for Voldemort’s extra men so we are going to let some of them in.” Harry informed him and the others around him as he watched the progress of the Death Eaters.

“You doing WHAT? Are you insane? We can’t let them in here! If they get that door open then they are going to flood out of the forest and into the castle.” After saying this Ernie got to his feet and made his way to the door leading back in to the castle.

“Where are you going?”

“To help those down stairs since it is clear that you are willing to sacrifice them.”

“Don’t be stupid! If you go down now you will screw everything up. There is not enough time to bring you up to date on the preparations they are putting together down there. Without knowing EXACTLY what you’re supposed to do and what is supposed to happen, in every detail, you will be no good to anyone down there. So just sit tight!”

CRASH

Everyone stiffened as they heard the great doors of Hogwarts come crashing down. They watched in horror as Death Eaters came spilling out of the forest, sweeping across the grounds like a plague. Everyone on the battlements anxiously waited Harry’s order but as the dark wizards came closer and closer it still hadn’t come. Everyone was shocked when they reached the doors and still Harry did nothing.

Harry was watching the Death Eaters below as they charged into the castle with a look of intense concentration on his face. Suddenly the concentration fell and was

replaced with a look of pure intensity and fury. Everyone watching him had to admit that Harry looked down right terrifying. Harry rose from his crouched position quickly and once again waved his hand at the two towers flanking their position. Everyone turned to see an illusion drop revealing a massive cauldron sitting atop each tower. Slowly they began to roll over to pour their contents on to the unexpected wizards below. But the smiles of those present quickly turned to looks of horror as they realized that it was not boiling water or even boiling pitch that was contained within the smoldering cauldrons. At the looks that were thrown his way Harry only gave a brief reply before he dumped the contents.

“This is war! You do what you have to!” Suddenly molten steel began to fall from the sky sending the Death Eaters below into a frenzy as they panicked and screamed out in intense pain as the steel spread over their bodies. Even those that were not hit by the initial down pour had no escape as the liquid metal splashed far and spread fast.

During this horrific display of battle tactics the Centaurs, who were holding position until Harry’s signal, charged and attacked the contingent of dark creatures from behind, striking a serious blow to the Chimaeras. Led by Magorian the centaurs attacked with a ferocity unequaled by anything those watching had ever seen. It was clear that they took the attack on their herd very personally and were seeking retribution. And they were getting it.

“Now!” Harry shouted and all at once they rose from their concealed positions and began throwing curses at anything that moved. All were shocked at the seen below and more than a few felt the need to throw up but they held it off. There were several hundred Death Eaters lying dead below with many more screaming as their lives slowly slipped away as the molten steel refused to be removed or to even cool. Roughly fifteen hundred more stood watching in horror as their comrades lay dead or dying in front of them and the raging battle behind them. The centaurs were still fiercely fighting by the lake as the Unicorns used their own brand of magic to rid the field of the Lethifolds who are immune to most spells with the exception of the Patronus. The magnificent creatures, hooves pounding, charged the creatures as a soft white light erupted from their horns and shot out at the Lethifolds causing them to literally disintegrate on the spot. When the last of them were gone the unicorns turned back and returned to the forest, their job done.

/ENTRY HALL/

Ginny and everyone else waited with baited breath as the Death Eaters worked to open the doors into the school. She had quickly checked everything and then rechecked and then checked again. They could not afford anything to go wrong because of sloppiness.

CRASH

As the doors came crashing down Ginny could feel everyone’s growing anxiety reach its peak. From the third floor landing they watched as countless Death Eaters stormed into the school firing curses at nothing as though they expected to be met with resistance when they entered. When they found none they split into two groups! One heading to the Great Hall the other heading down one of the many corridors situated

on the first floor.

“Miss Weasley, what exactly is Mr. Potters signal going be?” Ginny looked down at the tiny Professor Flitwick with a rather intimidating grin.

“Lets just say things should be getting a lot hotter right about....now!” As she said this they watched in shocked amazement as the line of Death Eaters coming in was suddenly halted as a bright wall seemingly covered the entrance. This ‘wall’ also seemed to muffle the sound of the Death Eaters outside so the real significance of what was actually happening eluded them.

“What in Merlin’s name is that?” Gaspd several of the students. The teachers and ministry personnel in the group were just as shocked.

“Molten steel! Harry dumped six tons of it down on them from the towers flanking the battlements.” She had a very nasty looking grin as she said this which did not do much to reassure those that were questioning her sanity.

“But, but that’s horrible!” Cho whispered harshly. The Slytherin boy, named Chris Harken, next to her spoke up at that point.

“Would you rather that they ALL be in here with us?” After saying this he looked back at the wall of steel and gave a little chuckle. “Damn Potter!” He laughed to himself.

“Alright everyone get ready, they should be about to get through the doors to the Great Hall.” Ginny announced and everyone made their way down the stairs and took up their positions. They waited quietly for their little surprises to be discovered.

BOOOOM

“Damn you didn’t say those things would be that loud!” A young Ravenclaw said as he removed his hands from his ears. Ginny just rolled her eyes and waited. Several other explosions sounded from down the corridor the second group of Death Eaters had moved down and loud shouting and screaming could be heard along with the sounds of more detonations in the direction of both groups.

“Ok Ginny what exactly were those things we set up?” Cho was very curious as to how so small an object could make that much noise.

“There called claymore mines, there a muggle explosive, inside the box is a bit of plastic explosive that launches dozens of small steel balls in the direction they are pointed in. Needless to say those areas of the castle are probably very messy right now. Here they come!” Everyone kept their mouths shut as they heard hurried footsteps and shouts to retreat. Moments later a group of torn and bloody Death Eaters came into view as they rushed towards the exit unknowing of what had happened to their only line of retreat.

Upon reemerging into the entrance hall and seeing it sealed many began to panic and started firing any and every spell they could think of to destroy the wall of steel before

them. With them distracted Ginny and her group began to quietly take up covered positions surrounding the Death Eaters, getting ready to fire as soon as the order was given and it was given almost immediately.

Suddenly nearly one hundred students and teachers rose seemingly out of nowhere to fire spell after spell at the assembled Death Eaters who tried to run only to be faced by more. Ginny for her part quickly jumped into the fray, sword in hand, and began to cut her way through. Unaccustomed to physical attack, her opponents went down in quick succession. The fight was fierce but quick and soon all Death Eaters were either dead or unconscious. After binding all captured Ginny turned back to the others who were looking at her with trepidation. It was only natural after all, after her charge into the Death Eaters she was now nearly covered in blood. But she had the feeling that that was not what they were staring at as if they were afraid of her. After all, this was sweet, little, defenseless Ginny. No one believed that she of all people could be so damn violent. After she used a few cleaning charms on herself she got tired of the stares.

“Knock it off!” She snapped. “This is war; we all must do what is needed to win. Even if it means doing things that you never would have thought of doing before. Got it?” When everyone nodded, still a little shocked, Ginny stood and rejoined the group.

“You know Miss Weasley, you could have at least attempted to take some of them prisoner!” Said a rather pompous looking ministry official. Ginny looked at him sharply before commenting.

“That sounds all well and good coming from a ministry official. From a ministry that on countless occasions failed to act. How many INNOCENT people died because of that inaction? So do not lecture me on how we decide to fight this war. As for prisoners; it doesn’t matter really. The way things are planned I will be greatly surprised if any of the Death Eaters outside survive. Alright everyone lets get our wounded to the hospital wing and get up to the battlements and help the others out!” Ginny left the official sputtering about her audacity as she went up the stairs toward the door leading outside. The others looked at the man with disgust and went to join Ginny.

/AZKABAN/

Tonks and the other Aurors at Azkaban were fighting off the dark wizards that had just broken through the gates of the wizard prison. They were clearly not Death Eaters as they did not wear the customary black robes and masks that identified them as such. Instead these wizards were wearing blood red robes with their hoods up masking their faces in shadow.

For quite some time they were at a great advantage due to the fact that these men had come here expecting to be facing Dementors, not Aurors. They had charged in firing the Patronus charm as they came. They were in for a great shock as they ran head long into a barrage of stunning and disarming spells. But that shock wore off soon enough and that was how Tonks found herself in this particular situation. She was positioned in the lower levels that held the high security cells.

Her and her partner, a man named Troy Stevens, were stationed outside of the cells

holding those that were taken from Hogwarts on the night of Harry's return, including Lucius Malfoy and his lackeys. They were getting strong resistance as they tried to hold back the tide but the skill that Tonks now fought with surprised Troy immensely which said one of two things. Either she was just in good form today or she wished to keep her talents hidden from everyone unless it was needed. As Troy thought about it as he fought he decided that it must be the latter as most Aurors liked to keep their abilities to themselves.

Troy began to slowly fall back even as Tonks had begun to advance, moving back until he was a full two feet behind her right shoulder. After throwing several curses Tonks looked back at him to tell him to move up only to find his wand trained on her as he cried out. "Stupify." Tonks fell into a heap on the cold hard floor of the prison, blackness engulfing her vision.

"Stevens I'm glad that you decided lend a hand! This little bitch was much more trouble then we were led to believe." Troy stepped forward and shook the man's hand before replying.

"Yes she was. How she was able to keep that skill hidden is beyond me but it will do her no good now." Pointing his wand at Tonks, he had begun to say the killing curse. But before he could finish he was stopped by the man he had just been speaking to.

"No Stevens. The master wants some prisoners and this woman just might be worth keeping around." He said as he released Troy's arm. "Alright from these cells we are to get only Malfoy. Those henchmen of his are not worth our master's time. Get him out and let's get going." With that said the unknown man turned on his heel and made his way back down the long dark corridor.

/FORBIDDEN FOREST/

Voldemort stood and watched as his Death Eaters had begun rushing into Hogwarts with no small amount of satisfaction showing on his snake like face. "Soon Potter, you will know what real power is." He whispered to himself as he turned back to his inner circle, who were assembled around him. "Take no prisoners!" This simple order was met with great excitement as Voldemort's most trusted and powerful followers began to walk out onto the grounds only to stop with gasps of horror.

"My Lord!" Voldemort turned quickly at the exclamation and the look on his face mirrored that of his followers. Watching as liquid steel was being poured down onto his army sent shivers of fear throughout his body. Turning again to see the Chimaeras and Lethifolds being decimated by Centaurs and unicorns only enhanced his feelings of dread. Many of the inner circle decided that now would be a good time to make a run for it only to find that Hagrid, crossbow in hand, and Grawp had moved in behind them.

"Move the dragons and Basilisks up! Now!" Voldemort shrieked. Firmly believing that this was the only way that they could still win this battle. Two Death Eaters were only to happy to carry out this order and quickly jumped on brooms and began to fly high over the forest. Voldemort and the rest of his followers made their way out of the forest and on to the grounds to escape the rain of arrows from Hagrid's crossbow and

the massive rocks launched through the air by Grawp. Rushing out of the trees Voldemort and his Death Eaters were unaware of the grins across Hagrid and Grawp's faces as they rushed into a trap from which there was no escape.

/BATTLEMENTS/

"Harry, Colin has just been hit pretty hard!" Harry rushed down the line to where Denis Creevy knelt over his motionless brother.

"What happened?" Harry asked hurriedly hoping that it wasn't anything too serious.

"A few Death Eaters all cast the Cruciatus curse at me and three other fourth years. They ran towards us and threw us all out the way. Harry, even after taking three of them he was still able to reach me before the fourth took him down." Denis cried while Harry made a quick examination. With a wave of his hand a small bottle of potion appeared in his hand.

"Envigorate!" Colin's eyes snapped open as a scream escaped his lips.

"Colin drink this! It will take away the pain. Well some of it anyway." He quickly emptied the bottle and instant relief passed over his face.

"Thanks! What happened?"

"God damn Colin. You took four Cruciatus curses saving your brother and these others." Harry chuckled as he helped Colin to his feet. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah, just one hell of a headache! Watch out!" He suddenly pushed Harry out of the way and was hit on the shoulder by a flash of red light. With a cry of pain Colin went down again. Gasping for breath as he lay on his back. "Fuck! Do those damn curses seek me out or what? Harry you wouldn't happen to have another one of those little bottles would you?" He choked out as he struggled to sit up, leaning against the wall. Harry looked at the younger boy in front of him in utter astonishment.

"Merlin's beard Colin! I have never seen anyone but the other heirs take that much and still remain coherent!" Colin beamed at this but quickly remembered the pain. Harry quickly gave him another dose of pain relieving potion. "Colin it might be a good idea if you go down to see Madam Pomfrey."

"Not a chance in hell Harry! As long as I am still able to use my wand I will not leave this wall!" Seeing the intense look in Colin's eyes told Harry and all those present that he would not leave for any reason. Slowly Harry nodded.

"Alright Colin! Just watch yourself." And with that Harry stood and began making his way back to his position just as Ginny and the others made their way out onto the battlements. Everyone but Ginny looked on at the battlefield and gasped at what they saw. With all of the Chimaeras destroyed and Voldemort on the field, the Centaurs had taken up position at the rear of the grounds preventing any escape. They were making quick strikes, charging in and slashing at the Death Eaters flank then retreating back to their position as another group charged in.

“So Harry, you look like you are having fun! Is anyone seriously wounded?” Ginny asked.

“We have sent several down to the hospital wing but the only one seriously wounded has been Colin but he refuses leave!” Colin has always been a friend to so naturally she became extremely nervous.

“What happened, how bad is it?”

“I’m not sure exactly how bad it is, but he has already been hit by several minor curses, but, he has been hit by the Cruciatus five times!” Ginny took this news calmly but her eyes betrayed her fright.

“Five times! How, I mean how can he still stand much less fight?”

“I don’t know, but look!” Ginny looked down the line to where Harry was pointing. What she saw shocked her several times over. Colin was standing near Fred and George, who were helping him remain standing, blood was running down his face from several open wounds on his face and arms from the pain of Cruciatus. He now held a wand in both hands, borrowing one from a student that was sent to the hospital wing, casting curses in rapid succession, hitting his mark nearly every time.

“How is this possible?” Shock could now be seen clearly on her face, something she had not shown in a very long time.

“As I said before, I do not know, but I do have an idea. But for right now I think it is about time that we finish this!” He looked at Ginny and she nodded. Calling to the others, all five heirs suddenly disappeared from the battlements only to reappear seconds later on the battlefield.

“What the hell are they doing down there? Try to keep at least some of those bastards off their backs!” Colin shouted to everyone as he saw Harry, Professor Dumbledore and the others appear in the midst of the remaining seven hundred Death Eaters. Everyone began doing as he said without even stopping to think what had happened to the Colin that they used to know. After all, as the old saying goes, ‘Heroes and leaders are not born. They are forged in the heat of adversity.’ Who were they to argue over how, when, and why this one was forged.

Charging into the fray with lightning speed the five heirs were in intimidating site. Ginny, Neville and Luna swinging their magnificent blades in wide arcs as they slashed through their opponents. Professor Dumbledore wielded his staff with the strength and vigor of a man one quarter his age. Spells far more powerful than any ‘normal’ wizard could ever hope to accomplish erupted from the simple looking ‘chunk’ of wood, mowing down Death Eaters and sending them flying as he went.

But above all in intensity, intimidation, and sheer power was Harry by far. He had shrunk his ax down to the size of a tomahawk and used it as such, carrying it in his left hand as held his sword in his right. He channeled magic through his sword to intensify the effects when need be. He was in the process of removing his ‘hatchet’

from a man's sternum when Neville's voice sounded in his head.

"Harry, Gwen says that they have dealt with the Basilisks and her and the others are on their way here! Voldemort wants them in the fight now so be ready to get out of their way." Gwen was the name that he had decided to call his dragon companion since she had never had a name. She was a very large Hungarian Horntail, much larger than any even Charlie had seen. This demanded a certain respect among other dragons so she was addressed with titles, not names. So she was more than happy and honored to have Neville give her a name. A name that she found very beautiful.

"Alright, inform the others and then begin to pull back to the east. When they run the western forest has to be their only line of retreat."

"My god we have to get them out of there! Now!" This exclamation caused many to turn towards the Weasley twins in confusion but they got their explanation in the form of two hands pointing to the horizon over the forest. Roughly five miles out you could easily see many large dark shapes flying swiftly towards Hogwarts. Bursts of fire billowing in every direction as they came, lighting up the darkened sky giving many the idea that this is what the skies of hell must look like.

"Don't worry guys. Those are friends of Neville's." Colin informed them calmly even though he looked like the devil himself slapped him around for a bit and was staying conscious only by sheer will power.

"Neville's friends! What is he going after Charlie's job now?" George joked before he turned serious again. "Colin maybe you should go see Madam Pomfrey?"

"I already told Harry and I am going to tell you the same! I am not leaving this wall until either this is finished or I am dead so don't bother suggesting that again." After saying this Colin turned back and once again he began to fight not noticing the flash of bright red light that was speeding towards him at that very moment. The curse went unnoticed by him until the precise moment that it made contact with the left side of his head. He had for the sixth time that night been hit with the force and power of the Cruciatus curse but this time he would not get back up.

"My god! George, help me get him to Madam Pomfrey!" And with that Fred and George levitated Colin and moving as fast as they could, made their way to the hospital wing.

"Madam Pomfrey was tending to the wounds of several students and teachers, murmuring irritably to herself because the majority of the wounds afflicted were because the fighter had gotten careless. She had just given a pain relieving potion to Mr. Clarkson, Mr. Weasley's assistant, when Fred and George slammed there way into the ward. The way that the twins entered left no doubt in the matron's mind that someone had finally been seriously injured but she was not ready for what she was about to see.

Fred had just finished put Colin carefully on one of the beds when she arrived beside them and she could not hold in her horrified gasp. If his face had not been nearly covered in blood, it would be painfully obvious that he was pale as death it's

self. Open wounds crisscrossed nearly his entire body. He was bruised, battered, swollen and had lost a great deal of blood. "Ok what happened?" She demanded as she gave him a thorough examination.

"Well most of his injuries were caused because of being hit by six Cruciatus curses. And, if he is like just about everyone else out there, I am sure he has been hit by many lesser curses." George would have continued had he not been cut off.

"Six times! Why the hell wasn't he brought in before now?"

"He refused to leave! We all tried to get him to come down here after he took the first five but not even Harry could convince him. He said he would not leave until we had won or until he was dead."

"Well that very may be what happens. Hasn't he ever heard of ducking?" Pomfry snapped as she poured several different potions down his throat.

"Well in reality he could have avoided all of them easily. But the first four came when they were shot at some fourth years and Colin ran down the line pushing them down, getting hit by one each time. It was not until the fourth that he went down." Seeing many shocked faces from those around them that were listening Fred picked up where his brother left off.

"Harry had given him some pain potion and helped him up. As soon as he was on his feet he pushed Harry back taking another of those damn curses in his shoulder." Fred continued to tell Madam Pomfry everything that had happened in hopes that it could help but she seemed certain that if he survived the night then he would be ok. The twins had no other choice but to settle on this piece of information as they made their way back to the fight.

Just moments after pulling back to the eastern side of the grounds the dragons flew over head letting loose powerful roars that sounded a lot like battle cries. The four hundred or so remaining Death Eaters cheered as the herd circled the school as if looking for the best place to begin. But they soon became confused as the Dragons flew back out over the forest only to turn back and come at the school from the east.

With a massive thud the beasts landed on the grounds between the heirs and Death Eaters with a look of malice in their eyes. Even the simplest minded Death Eater now got the picture that remaining on Hogwarts soil only guarantees one thing and that one thing was death. As soon as the large reptiles began breathing flames the dark wizards decided that now would be a good time to make a hasty retreat. Running to the only unguarded area of the grounds many believed that if they could just make it to the trees then they would be alright. After all the Centaurs were quite some distance away and they could surely make it past the anti-apparation wards before they could move in to intercept them.

Charging into the forest every Death Eater removed their masks and black robes and threw them aside as they ran. After all if they apparate back to their home they could destroy or get rid of any incriminating evidence and sit back and deny everything and without their robes and masks or any other evidence, there was no way

that anyone could prove that they were Death Eaters. If all else fails they could always claim that they were under the Imperius curse, it worked for many Death Eaters last time so why not this?

The answer to 'why not this time' was rather simple really. They were simply not going to give them the opportunity to bullshit an incompetent judge into believing that they were not acting of their own free will.

All of those remaining alive stopped suddenly as a wave of ice cold air began to sink into their very bones. Looking out ahead of them they could see dozens upon dozens of tall black robed creatures literally gliding towards them. "Dementors." One man gasped as he tried, unsuccessfully to block the creature's effects. Many had turned to run away as fast as they could only to come to a dead stop as they peered out over what appeared to be an army of giant spiders. Shouts and cries of fright and pain were heard as far away as Hogsmead as the Acromantula and Dementors bounded savagely into the group. The Dementors were promised fifty living Death Eaters, to cover those that may escape from Azkaban that very night, all the rest would never leave that forest alive.

Voldemort stood looking across the grounds in near panic. At being so spectacularly out maneuvered his weak grip on sanity finally broke. He looked around wildly, not seeing that his long time nemesis was now stalking towards him. Determined to gain at least some measure of victory this day, he did what no one, not even Lord Maul had the stomach to do.

"Potter! Come face me! You will not escape me again." What little control Tom Riddle had was now gone. No longer did he stand with supreme superiority; also lost was the calculating look within his eyes. He was now a caged animal seeking any form of escape, even if that escape meant facing the one man that truly terrified him.

"I'm right behind you Riddle!" Tom turned swiftly and was surprised that he now had to look up to see the eyes of his foe. He had been informed of Harry's physical change but he was not ready for it. "You seem a little upset Tom. I hope that I may be of some service." Voldemort slowly began to back away, as Harry moved forward, muttering about the impossibility of all that has happened this night.

"No Tom! The only impossibility is the idea that you will walk off these grounds alive. Your death will be two fold!" Harry slowly pulled his sword out of its sheath and held it in front of him. "Death by Gryffindor!" Then he removed the 'hatchet' from his belt and retuned it to its original size. "Death by Slytherin! For to long you and many before you have tainted and soiled the name of Slytherin. All of that ends tonight." Suddenly Harry leapt forward, grasping Voldemort's shoulders, and both disappeared from the battlefield.

Voldemort sat bolt upright, head swinging in every direction attempting to figure out what had just happened. After composing himself he realized that he was sitting on a hard cold floor in a semi dark room that was bare of any form of ornamentation. Believing that he must have somehow been able to apparate away from Hogwarts he began laughing as he rose to his feet to find out exactly where he had transported himself. Making his way out of the door we walked into a brightly lit cavern that

housed only a simple table that had only two occupants. One he recognized all too well. "Potter!" He spat as he quickly raised his wand, firing several powerful curses simultaneously. Harry for his part simply raised his hand and deflected every curse.

"Sit down Tom!"

"You dare to give me orders boy? Avada cadavera!" The bright green light of the killing curse sped towards Harry, who sat unfazed until the final second. Once more the curse was simply deflected as he never took his eyes off the wizard in front of him. Voldemort was shocked beyond belief that Harry was able to deflect the most powerful curse known by the wizarding world. He turned, looking towards the other man, as if to try his luck with him.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you Tom. You see Forge here trained me. So I doubt that you would have much luck. Now as I said before, SIT DOWN!" When Voldemort still did not obey Harry began to get annoyed. "Why do you try my patience Tom?" With a wave of his hand Voldemort was forced down into the chair before him. "Now that was not so hard was it?"

"I will make you pay for your insolence boy! Mark my words!" He had certainly seemed to regain some measure of control on himself.

"Quite a blowhard isn't he Harry?" Forge Asked. Harry simply nodded.

"You will pay along with Potter for that comment you weak minded fool!" This comment only seemed to amuse the pair as they began to laugh hysterically.

"Just for your information Riddle, I have been alive for many centuries before you were born and will be around long after your death, which is creeping closer and closer as we speak." Forge responded while gasping for breath. He certainly found Voldemort's arrogance very entertaining. After composing himself Harry stood and began walking around the table.

"Now Tom let's get down to business! At Hogwarts I told you that your death would be in two parts. Gryffindor and Slytherin. In actuality you could say it is in three parts. You could say Merlin as well." Upon seeing Voldemort's confused expression Harry continued. "You see Tom; you have committed grievous crimes against three great families. First, you murdered my parents, killing an heir of Gryffindor and attempting to kill the last." Here Harry stopped but was continued by another.

"Second!" Tom's head spun and his eyes met with those of a very pissed off Albus Dumbledore. Albus had for many years hoped and wished that one day Tom Riddle would someday come back, leaving Voldemort behind, but after his many years of training with Harry and the others he had realized that that was to never be. "You attacked and murdered my daughter and her family. Part of the line of Merlin. Twenty four years later you murdered one, Lilly Potter, my granddaughter, also of the line of Merlin. And also attempting to murder the last of the line of Merlin, Harry Potter." At this point any color that Voldemort had left was gone from his face.

“And finally, you and those before you have desecrated the noble name of Salazar Slytherin and once again, you attempted to murder one of Slytherin’s line. Namely myself. You see Tom, Salazar was not an evil man. His legacy has been twisted and torn for a millennia by those from his own line. Well tonight Tom, THEIR legacy dies with you.”

“Sadly, neither Harry nor myself will be the one to ultimately rid the world of your evil.” Voldemort, finding this as a sign of weakness, quickly jumped to exploit this.

“The two of you are weak! You know what must be done but you refuse to take that step. That is why you will never defeat me.” He scoffed.

“No Tom it is not out of weakness but out of, well lets say tradition.” Albus finished with a grin.

“You see Tom there is an tradition among very old and noble families that if a serious crime is committed against them, such as murder, then the master of the house, so to speak, would be granted retribution against the aggressor. In other words Tom I promised Salazar Slytherin himself, the opportunity to end the dark side of his line for all time.” This seemed to shock Voldemort more than anything else said this night.

“You are insane Potter, Slytherin has been dead for a thousand years!” He was cut off from saying anything else as a new voice spoke up from behind him. Causing the other three occupants of the room to laugh.

“You are wrong in that assessment Tom!” Turning around once again Voldemort’s eyes fell on the three new comers. The one that spoke strangely enough looked to be some kind of crossbred of Harry and Severus Snape. Not being able to take his eyes off this man he did not realize who the other two men where.

“You see the fact that you have wronged my family as well as those of my esteemed colleagues here, your life is in our hands. But since you are in fact of MY line, it is I who has the honor and pleasure of dispensing justice. But in the very unlikely event that you are able to defeat me then my friends here will get their opportunity. So Tom you see that Harry was correct in his statement that you would not survive.” The smirk that crossed Salazar’s lips would have made even Snape envious. “So shall we get started?” With a wave of his hand a sword appeared on the table before Voldemort.

Harry then walked up to his ultimate Grandfather. Then on bended knee, he handed Salazar the ax that Merlin himself had forged for him over one thousands years before. “Thank you my boy.” He replied as he placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder before he stood. Harry then repeated this gesture while presenting Godric Gryffindor his sword just as Aldus had done the same, presenting his staff to Merlin.

“Now as much as I would love to stay and see this, I have a few friends that need my help!” With the permission of his ancestors and began to leave. Walking past where Voldemort sat shaking from fright. Stopping behind him, Harry leaned in and gave a parting word. “I’ll see you in hell Tom Riddle.” And with that Harry had

disappeared.

Tonks was sitting bruised and bloody in a cold dark cell trying to remember what had happened to her. She was feeling incredibly weak at the moment and her mind was working slow. She remembered fighting in Azkaban and then blackness. She sat thumping the palm of her hand on her forehead attempting to jog her memory. After a few moments she suddenly stopped.

“Troy!” She managed to growl out as her eyes began to burn with hatred.

“Damn Tonks you need to calm down before you give yourself an aneurism.” Looking up swiftly Tonks’ blue eyes clashed with green for several moments before she realized who it was. Jumping to her feet, her fatigue forgotten, she wrapped her arms around him not believing he was actually here. “Oh, hello. I would have been here sooner but I had to take care of Tom.” After saying this she pulled back from him.

“He’s dead then?” She asked hopefully.

“Pretty much. At the moment he is fighting for his life in a dual against Salazar Slytherin. That is unless he has already lost. Even if he manages to beat Salazar, Godric is in line right after him, then Merlin himself. All in all I do not believe he has much of a chance.”

“Um, ok I am not even going to attempt to understand how they, of all people, are dueling him. Wait a minute, are they sorcerers or mages or something?” Her response sent a smile across Harry’s face.

“Yes they are. Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff are also. Well Merlin isn’t, he is a Phoenix lord as I am. Now I don’t especially like prisons so lets go!” Walking across the room Harry placed his hand on the door and a moment later a soft metallic click could be heard before he opened the door.

“Been in a few prisons have we?” Tonks asked with a smirk on her face.

“Yeah a few!” He replied with a shrug. “Do you by any chance know how many prisoners are here?”

“Not a clue. But there has to be more.” The two walked out of the cell and quietly made their way down the corridor checking the other cells as they went. They had freed three other prisoners after taking out a few guards. Further down the corridor they began hearing an ear piercing scream that seemed to go on forever.

“Oh hell no! Tonks can you help her for a moment while I deal with this?” Releasing the young girl that he was holding he charged down the corridor towards the screams taking out several guards as he went. When he came to the door he did not even stop. He simply blew the door off it’s hinges and stormed inside casting several wandless curses as he went and some of the guards he simply killed with his bare hands. After the fighting was done he looked towards the woman that was being tortured. Her cloths were pretty much torn off and a quick examination of her wounds showed that she had been VERY violently raped as well as severely beaten.

Covering the women up with a blanket that was lying on the floor, he gathered her into his arms and quickly made his way back to the others. "Come on we have to get out of here fast!" He said through clinched teeth.

"Harry who is it?" Tonks asked as she walked towards him.

"I'm not sure! She has been so badly beaten but I think it is Amelia Bones." Upon hearing this Tonks moved towards him faster and when she reached him she could not help but let out a gasp of surprise and anger. The woman in his arm opened her eyes as much as she could without feeling pain.

"Mr. Potter?" She asked weakly as if not believing what she had seen. Harry smiled down at her before answering.

"Yes it's me. We are going to get you and everyone else out of here so you just try to relax." Mrs. Bones began to cough up some blood and then looked back up at him.

"Mr. Potter I'm not going to make it. Leave me here so you and the others have a better chance."

"No I don't think so. Besides Susan would kill me if I left you here."

"Harry just leave me and get the others out!"

"No now shut up! Come on if we get out of here I'll give you a big wet kiss." This seemed to do the trick as Mrs. Bones gave a short chuckle but stopped because it hurt too much. Tonks on the other hand looked both shocked and gleeful at the same time.

"I knew it!" she nearly shouted but then covered her mouth with her hand. Harry just looked absolutely confused by this sudden outburst.

"Um, knew what?" This just brought a grin to her face because she knew something he didn't.

"Your Harry aren't you?" At this point the word 'confusion' just wasn't enough.

"Yeah I thought we established that the day we met." All thought of escape was temporarily pushed out of everyone's minds as they all looked at Tonks with looks that said very loudly that they thought she had gone insane.

"No not Harry Potter, well yes you are him to but I mean Harry Blackburn!" Ok this was not what Harry was thinking and nearly dropped Amelia on her head in his shock. That was all the extra confirmation that Tonks needed and she began to laugh quietly to herself. Harry for his part seemed to be in utter shock. Not moving, not blinking not even breathing.

"Dora?" He managed to gasp out after several moments. His question was

answered with Tonks flashing him a winning smile. "Holy shit!" Once more he was drawn in to silence.

"Hey who are you?" everyone stiffened as they heard someone shout and start moving towards them. Harry for his part never took his eyes off Tonks, simply readjusted his hold on Amelia, raised his right arm and shot a flash of blue light out of his hand sending the man fling back and landing in a heap on the floor unmoving.

"Alright everyone since Mr. Potter here seems to be in shock at the moment, lets get out of here." Tonks said trying her hardest not to laugh but failing miserably.

After nearly ten minutes of navigating the maze of corridors, cursing many guards and freeing another twenty prisoners they finally made it to the door leading out of this prison. However there was someone there, seemingly waiting for them.

"Well it is about damn time! What took you so long?" The cloaked man whispered harshly as he approached.

"Who the hell are you, and why are you waiting for us instead of trying to stop us?" Harry demanded.

"Well to answer your second question, I am waiting for you because I wish to go with you so it does me no good to try to stop you. As for who I am." The man reached up and lowered the hood of his cloak revealing a man with rat like features. Seeing the betrayer of his parents Harry quickly raised his arm preparing to kill the man before him.

"Why the hell do you want to go with us? I should kill you right now and save many others the trouble." Peter Pettigrew showed no intimidation at Harry's threat, he simply answered the question.

"You see Harry you killing me now means nothing to me, since I wish to go back with you to die anyway!" Peter said this with such determination and conviction that it down right shocked Harry and all those present. Especially those that did not know the man was still alive.

"What the hell are you talking about? Why would anyone go somewhere simply to die."

"Because Harry during our fifth year at Hogwarts myself and the other Marauders all signed a wizarding contract stating that if any of us betray one of our number in such a way that said Marauder is killed than that man's life would be forfeit. They would not receive the Dementor's Kiss, they would not be put to death by the ministry. Their life belonged to the remaining Marauder's, free for them to take. I am finally returning to honor that contract." He stopped for a moment as his eyes glistened with tears.

"I betrayed the only real friends I had ever had. I betrayed them out of fear of Voldemort. Then I returned to Voldemort and betrayed their son and the whole wizarding world out of fear of the remaining Marauders. My life for the last eighteen

years has been spent in nothing but fear and I am ready for that life to end.” With the look in his eyes Harry knew that the man was telling the truth and meant every word with intense conviction.

“Alright, let’s go!” Harry said after a moment then led everyone out past the wards and then transported them all to the very center of the Hogwarts grounds. Harry was able to move through most apperation wards freely by himself but taking others with him was something else. He was able to do this through the Hogwarts wards because of his relationship with two of the founders of the great school. But this was not on his mind at the moment as everyone with him with the exception of Tonks and Amelia began to throw up at the site of the massacre that had obviously taken place there.

“Well Harry it looks like you had fun.” Tonks commented. She had not retched her stomach up but she had gone very pale.

“Well there was no way in hell that I was going to allow those bastards to kill anyone inside.”

“How many did you capture?” Amelia asked warily.

“Fifty! Roughly three thousand others and all of the Dark creatures, with the exception of the dragons, are dead.” He replied, his face fixed in a grim mask as he carried Amelia and led the rest up to the castle.

Chapter Seventeen: Inspirational Announcement

Walking through the now unobstructed doorway into the school, Harry led the ragtag group of former prisoners up to the hospital wing. Passing through the entry hall, they seemed to be more shocked by the carnage around them now than they did outside. This was probably due to the fact that this was ‘inside’ Hogwarts.

“Harry, how did all these Death Eaters get inside, what if there are more?” Tonks asked in a strained voice as they made their way up the stairs.

“I let them in! Tom showed up with a lot more Death Eaters than we had anticipated so we had to rework our plan a bit. And no there aren’t any more. Ginny left none alive.” Everyone was quiet for the rest of the trip to the hospital wing, rolling things over in their minds.

Madam Pomfrey was administering yet another potion to young Colin Creevy when the doors burst open. She was about to start shouting to them to keep quiet in her ward when she noticed who it was and the shape of the people with him.

“My god, what happened?” She nearly yelled as Harry carefully put Madam Bones down on the bed nearest them.

“They were captured at Azkaban! Have you had any seriously wounded? I have to prepare some potions for Mrs. Bones here so I might as well do them all at once!”

Madam Pomfrey looked at him sharply for a moment before she remembered how bad Colin was doing and she nearly began to panic, not knowing how to help him.

“Mr. Creevy! He was hit by the Cruciatus at least six times as well as a tearing curse and a few minor curses. I have been trying everything I know but I can’t heal him.” She said frantically as Harry and the others stared at her in shock but Harry snapped out of it and got busy. Once again taking out the small box from his robes he immediately returned it to its full size and threw the doors open, walking in he quickly got to work while many in the hospital wing were looking through the door in amazement.

“Need some help Harry?” Turning towards the person speaking Harry came eye to eye with Tonks.

“You need to get fixed up first! You’re dripping blood everywhere!”

“I can handle a little blood loss!”

“I’m not worried about you running out of blood, I’m worried about you tracking blood all over the place!” Harry informed her in a fake annoyed tone of voice while he was measuring out ingredients. With a mischievous glint in her eye she waved her hand and got to work.

“There you go Harry!” Harry looked back at her and began laughing as he watched a mop following behind her cleaning the floor. “Better?” She asked with a grin. Walking over to her he quickly healed her wounded leg chuckling to himself and got back to work.

Harry and Tonks worked non stop for several hours, while sending sarcastic comments at each other, until they had completed six different potions. After administering each of the potions to Colin and Mrs. Bones the two went back to Harry’s potions chamber to clean up.

“You think Mr. Creevy is a sorcerer don’t you?” Tonks asked him out of nowhere as they were putting their ingredients away. The question took Harry by surprise a little but he didn’t show it.

“What makes you say that?” Harry wasn’t very convincing when he tried to lie to her.

“You still get the same facial expressions when you try to hide something from me. Now as for why I asked, that is simple. First; you know damned well that any wizard or witch would have at least some brain deterioration after being hit that many times with the Cruciatus, if they survived at all. Second; when we checked him over I could tell that he was hit by more than just six. Which means that he must have been hit by a few without even realizing it and I know you could tell as well. So don’t go playing ignorant with me!”

“Alright, fine, yes I think he may be a sorcerer! But I need to find out for sure. From what I saw during the fighting Colin is turning out to be a very good leader and I believe that we are going to need him in the future. So, the sooner we can find out and

get him trained the better.” Any other possible conversation was put on hold as Forge of all people Apparated directly into Harry’s potions chamber. Tonks nearly jumped out of her skin in fright and as a result nearly blasted him into oblivion. Harry simply turned on his stool and greeted his friend.

“Forge, how are you doing?” Harry asked with a wide grin as Forge stood up from behind the table the he had taken cover under.

“Well who is this fresh young thing?” Forge asked with a glimmer of mischief in his eyes. This question seemed amusing to both Harry and Tonks but Forge could not for the life of him figure out why.

“Forge this is Dora, Dora this is Forge!” Forge looked absolutely gleeful about this so naturally Harry was getting nervous.

“So this is the legendary Dora?” He asked with a very wide grin.

“Legendary?” Tonks was looking very confused and she had her doubts about this mans sanity.

“Yes, well you might as well be legendary, what with as much as Harry would talk about you.” Thud. Harry began slamming his head down onto the work table out of frustration. Forge of coarse simply ignored him and continued. “Yes he mopped around for centuries because he missed you. Ah, to be young again.” Forge finished Grinning while Tonks was staring wide eyed at Harry. Harry on the other hand simply continued to slam his head onto the table. Suddenly remembering something he jerked his head up to look at Forge.

“Did you bring what I wanted?” Forge’s face suddenly grew grim before he answered.

“Yes I did. But don’t you think this is a little extreme?”

“No I don’t. I think that it may be just what we need. We need to show everyone what happens to those that harm the innocent.” Forge thought about this for a moment then nodded in understanding. Using wandless magic, Harry amplified his voice so that it could be heard throughout the school. “Everyone above their third year, weather you participated in the defense of the school or not, is to report out on the grounds at once for a little announcement.” With that said Harry took a small leather bag from Forge and left his chamber and made his way out of the Hospital wing.

Fifteen minutes later nearly all of the schools occupants were gathered outside waiting for Harry to begin. Many were starting to get fidgety and impatient as Harry just stood there. Moving forward, Harry stopped when he was directly in front of the gathered crowd before uttering a word. “Ok now that you are all here I will bring out our final guests then we will begin.” Once again Harry returned the ‘box’ to its original size and opened the door to show that it was Harry’s own little dungeon. After going in, those outside waited a few minutes until Harry re-emerged with seven Slytherin students following behind him.

“Good, now we can begin!” He started as Malfoy and his friends stood off to the side

looking very pissed off. "Now for all of you who were not involved in the fighting, we won! Out of roughly 3500 Death Eaters and many more dark creatures, there were only fifty survivors. All of who were taken directly to Azkaban by the Dementors. They survived because we allowed it. We on the other hand, lost no one." With this said the crowd cheered loudly but quieted down when Harry put his hands up. "The majority of you decided that you would rather fight alongside your fellow classmates than leave it in the hands of others and I greatly thank you. But even with this great victory we must remember that this was only one battle in a war that is just beginning. Lord Maul will not make the same mistakes that Voldemort did. Many of you first heard that name when I briefed you on everything that was going on tonight before the fight. Some of you had heard the name before because you follow him. All of you must understand that he and his followers will suffer the same fate as Voldemort and his." After saying this Harry removed the small leather bag from his belt and enlarged it. He reached inside and pulled it out again and the crowd gave a collective gasp, many even screamed or fainted.

In his outstretched hand Harry clutched the head of Tom Riddle. The faces of the Slytherins that Harry had locked up looked especially pale.

"This was the fate of Tom Riddle! And this is the fate of Lord Maul!" Harry declared as he threw the decapitated head aside. "I showed you this not because of some sick, morbid fantasy of mine. I showed you this for one reason and one reason only. Following the path of the dark arts will send you no where but to an early grave. Whether you are killed by your angry master or by me. You choose him, you choose death. Plain and simple." Harry surveyed every face as he spoke and was greatly relieved to see that their looks of disgust and fear at seeing a severed head had melted away. Their faces were now set in grim determination and resolve. Reading their eyes and movements Harry could tell that many had been following Lord Maul but changed their minds after listening to Harry. More than likely they were among those that were threatened into obedience.

"We are our own people, with our own fates. We do not have to repeat the mistakes of the past that will send our children and grandchildren to die in a seemingly endless war because we were not strong enough or determined enough to stop it. Many call you children and say that you have no business sticking your noses into 'adult' affairs. Well they are wrong. If it were not for you Hogwarts would no longer be standing, that's a fact. Most of you may still be students but it is time. This is your time now. A time in which you must rise up and beat back all your fears and worries to face your foe and cast them back in to the very pits of hell. Do or die! Win or lose! But do what you must with no regrets!" When Harry finished speaking everyone was real quiet as if waiting for more. They all had identical looks on their faces that clearly said that they could not believe that this had come from Harry Potter.

With a little grin on his face Harry began walking back up to the castle but stopped when he noticed Dumbledore in front of him. Smiling up at his grandfather and a hint of mischief in his eyes Harry made one comment before continuing his journey towards the school. "Now that was a back to school speech, wouldn't you say?"

Albus stood looking after Harry with a very confused look on his face before he realized that due to Harry's timely arrival he was unable to put much in to his

customary speech. Also that school had not been in session for even a week now. Usually, things like this always seem to happen at the end of the year. Thinking things over a small smile spread across his lips as he followed the students as they decided to go back to their dorms.

Chapter Eighteen: A Chat with Peter

It was two o'clock in the morning but Harry was not asleep or even the least bit tired. He was now sitting in the Headmaster's office awaiting the rest of his guests. Sitting across from him, with a pensive look on his face, was Albus Dumbledore. This of course was only natural considering that this was his office. The surprising thing to the other occupants of the room was that sitting beside Harry was none other than Peter 'Wormtail' Pettigrew. Professors Snape and McGonagall looked upon the traitorous murderer with contempt and loathing, as did Ginny, Luna, and Neville. Harry on the other hand looked on with a look not unlike Dumbledore's, as if he was thinking of every possible outcome of this meeting.

Suddenly the door burst open and Sirius and Remus rushed towards Harry like excited children, congratulating him on his little speech. When no one, not even Harry, laughed at their little jokes they got the distinct idea that this meeting was of some great importance. Looking around at all those present, they locked eyes with Peter at the same time and lunged for the little rat. Their progress however was slowed as they came in contact with an invisible barrier surrounding their former friend.

"What the hell is he doing here?" "Why didn't you just kill him?" The two old friends began asking questions back to back leaving no room for any answers so naturally Harry got annoyed.

"QUIET! Thank you! Now to answer your questions, he is here because he wanted to come back." This only seemed to infuriate everyone in the room.

"What, does he expect us to just forgive and forget all of the people he has killed and welcome him back with open arms?" Sirius asked scathingly as he stared daggers into his former friend.

"No I do not! The reason I am here is because I wanted to set the record straight and to also honor that contract we all signed in our fifth year!" Peter retorted with just as much force. But this seemed only to confuse nearly everyone present with the exception of the two marauders and Harry. After a few minutes it was Remus who broke the silence.

"Ok, set the record straight about what? Make it quick so we can get on with this!" He said as he and Sirius removed their wands and held them loosely in their hands.

"First of all I will start with what 'really' happened the night Lily and James were killed."

"We know exactly what happened you murdering son of a bitch!"

“Sirius you know only what you have chosen to believe. Much the same way most people once viewed you as a traitor. The fact of the matter is that I was captured by Voldemort the same night that I became their secret keeper. And I remained a prisoner in Lucius Malfoy’s dungeons until six months ago. Yes I broke and gave away their hiding place, but everything else such as framing you, killing all those muggles and helping Voldemort return I did not do.” While everyone else was screaming in outrage Harry was looking upon Peter with a curious glint in his eyes.

“If you did none of those things why did you say that you betrayed me and the entire wizarding world when you returned to Voldemort and helped him regain his power?” Harry asked coolly.

“Well if I had told you that I had nothing to do with what had happened to Sirius or yourself at the hands of Voldemort I am really sure you would understand.” He replied sarcastically.

“What happen then? Start from the beginning!” Harry asked with a cool voice that silenced everyone. Peter sat there for a moment thinking before he said anything. Then suddenly like a dam breaking everything began to spill out.

“Voldemort began sending Death Eaters to me two years before his down fall to try to convince me to spy for him. Each time I refused but fear was slowly building. When it came time for James and Lily to chose a secret keeper I like Sirius believed that Voldemort would immediately suspect Sirius to be chosen. It meant a lot to me that they trusted me with their lives even though I suspected switching to me would be a mistake. When I arrived at my home to gather my things, before going into hiding myself, there were Death Eaters there waiting for me.”

“Now everyone knows that Voldemort hated muggles but when it came to torturing someone he did not care if it were by magical or muggle methods just as long as the job got done.

/flashback/

Peter was hanging by his wrists from chains snaking their way down from the ceiling deep in the dungeons under Malfoy Manor. He was barely conscious as he was hit with the Cruciatus curse again and again.

“Ack, this is getting us nowhere! Lucius get that muggle contraption!” Spat a very angry dark lord. His eyes burned with hatred as he looked upon the pathetic sight before him. Peter’s head was hanging low as blood was pouring from numerous wounds from all over his body. Voldemort had been torturing him for just over twenty four hours now and he was getting nowhere. Lucius returned moments later dragging behind him a muggle generator and a pair of jumper cables. Peter, whose father had been a muggle, knew immediately what they were planning and began to panic.

“Now now Pettigrew, what happened to that famous Gryffindor courage?” Voldemort slowly removed a vile of potion that was the darkest black and forced it down Peter’s throat. His eyes immediately began to cloud over as the potion slow

took over his mind. Pictures began to flash before his eyes. Pictures of his friends and family being tortured mercilessly, killed, laying dead at his feet as though some great battle had just been fought. Suddenly an intense pain hit him so hard he dropped to the ground screaming. Clutching his gut as he screamed he was oblivious to nearly all around him.

“Peter, Peter where are you?” At hearing his name called out Peter lifted his head and tried to pry his eyes open as foot steps grew closer.

“James?”

“Oh shit, Peter what the hell happened?” Looking up he saw a very worried James looking into his eyes. “Peter, Voldemort got away. He’s after Lily and Harry. Peter tell me where they are!” At that precise moment another wave of pain hit sending Peter almost over the edge. “Peter come on stay with me. I need to get to them before Voldemort does. Peter, where are they?”

“Go...G...Godric....Hollow!” Peter replied just before he passed into unconsciousness.

“Thank you very much Mr. Pettigrew!” Voldemort hissed as he left Peter’s cell and Lucius removed the jumper cables from the chains holding his arms.

/end flashback/

“When I woke up next Voldemort had already been beaten and a polyjuice potion had been made to trick Sirius and get him framed for murder. Malfoy liked to come down a lot to punish me for tricking his master or something. Later he used me as a sort of practice dummy for when he taught his son dark curses and the like.” When Peter had finished he had a haunted look in his eyes that left Harry with the conclusion that he was telling the truth. Sirius on the other hand did not believe him.

“So what are you saying? That someone using polyjuice potion did everything just because he liked to look like you?” Sirius demanded scathingly.

“No, not because he liked to look like me but because Voldemort had learned that if you add one teaspoon of crushed dragon spleen then Polyjuice will last for much longer, giving the drinker more time to finish what they had started. Unfortunately, for him anyway, and for me I guess, it turned out that the change was permanent.”

“How are we to know if any of this is true?” Tonks asked directly.

“Well the bit about the modified Polyjuice is true, I know how to brew it. I also know the antidote. But the fact remains that this could all be some tall tail.”

“That’s fair enough! If you wish I will answer any question under Veritaserum. But first I would like to ask you Harry if there is anything about me physically that is different than from the last time you saw me?” Everyone was clearly confused by this question but they looked none the less. Then they all noticed it.

“Your hand!” Harry gasped in shock. There in place of the shining silver was a real human hand. Harry walked over and inspected Wormtail’s right hand very closely. He also checked his left forearm, finding nothing. “There is nothing, no signs of magic, no evidence of tampering and no Dark Mark!” He informed those around him as he retook his seat.

“How is it that the other Death Eaters had no knowledge of this?” Snape sneered but Peter seemed to take no offence.

“The only ones privy to the information were the Malfoys, the man impersonating me and Voldemort himself. And myself of course.”

“How did you escape? And what have you been doing since then?” Remus asked after he had composed himself.

“I escaped about six months ago with the help of Narcissa Malfoy. During my stay with my most generous host Lucius, she had slipped me quite a bit of extra food and even helped to mend some of my wounds while Malfoy was out. She is actually not a bad person for a Slytherin. I would have died many many years ago had it not been for her. Any way after that I had tried to get hold of Remus but I was unable to locate him and decided to lay low for awhile when all hell broke loose. From that little fiasco at the ministry a few months ago to your mysterious disappearance and your very ostentatious return.” He add pointing in Harry’s direction.

“I had found out that the Dementors had been pulled out of Azkaban so I went to try and get Sirius out thinking he was still there. Unfortunately when I arrived there were Death Eater types everywhere pulling prisoners out and taking some Aurors as prisoners themselves. They had won the fight and yet they were still terrified because they thought that Harry here would show up and destroy them. So I knocked one out took their robes and followed them back to that compound where I met you by squeezing in with a group using a portkey. They all seemed very certain that you would show up to rescue the prisoners so I decided to stay and watch due to the fact that I thought you were just a skinny teenager like your dad was at your age and I wanted to find out what they were afraid of. Then again James was very powerful even at that stage in his life. I must admit that they were in their right mind to worry. You know the rest.” Peter looked around to find everyone staring at him as though he had two heads.

“What, I got something in my nose?” He asked whipping his nose. The door behind them burst open loudly sending all to their feet and some simply fell to the floor. Hagrid walked in swiftly with someone swung over his shoulder.

“Headmaster, Grawp an’ I came across someone very interesting in the forest!” Hagrid dropped the body on to the floor and with a loud groan the man turned over shocking many in the room for the tenth time in the last hour. Hagrid, who had not yet realized that Peter was in the room, was beaming with pride. “Found ‘im ‘bout an hour ago.” Hagrid, who had noticed everyone’s shocked expressions, began to look around the room until his eyes locked on Peter, whose eyes were burning with intense fury as he looked upon the man on the floor.

“What the bloody ‘ell is going on?” Hagrid asked as he looked between the two men.

“Severus, would you be so kind as to get some Veritaserum?” Snape was about to answer when Harry slipped him a small vial. He looked down at his hand confused for a moment until his face split into a wide grin.

“No need Headmaster, I have something just a little bit better!” Peter and of few others in the room looked on in confusion as Snape walked forward with a vial of dark purple liquid. After restraining the ‘other’ Peter, Snape poured three drops into his mouth before taking his seat. The man before them looked at them with contempt before he reached Wormtail, then his blood seemed to run cold.

“Now what is your name?” Dumbledore began.

“Peter Pettigrew!” Many in the room quickly covered their ears mere seconds before a high pitched wailing echoed throughout the school.

“What the hell was that?” Peter asked loudly as the screaming stopped.

“That is the effects of a truth potion, my personal favorite!” Harry answered.

“My god! No wonder these people are afraid of you!”

“Now once again, who are you?”

“Robert Longstreet!” The man gasped out as he sucked in as much breath as he could. The questioning went on for quite some time as the man confirmed Peter’s story. Mr. Diggory had to be physically restrained as the man gave his account of what happened the day Cedric was killed and Voldemort was reborn. The questioning lasted for nearly an hour before Peter interrupted.

“Now that that is taken care of, lets get on with the reason I am here!” Peter stated with determination in his eyes.

“What, you can’t be serious? You were just proven innocent!” Sirius exclaimed.

“Sirius we all signed that contract. I broke it. I intend to live up to it and I expect you to do the same.” Peter told his old friend as he was trying to fight back tears and the lump in his throat. “It was because of me that James and Lily are dead. I have been living with that for almost fifteen years. I can’t take it anymore! Sirius just do it!” He pleaded.

“NO!”

“Sirius, it’s what he wants!” Sirius turned swiftly to glare at Harry only to find calculating look in his eyes and he could just see the gears turning inside of Harry’s head.

“So be it!” Sirius relied as Harry went to lean up against Albus’ desk, right next to the Wormtail imposter. Sirius stood and pointed his wand at the friend he thought had betrayed them and had not seen for fifteen years. Peter closed his eyes as he waited for his fate. Harry looked over at Sirius and with a nod of his head Sirius fired.

“AVADA KEDAVRA!”

Everyone that had not known of the contract between the Marauders looked on in shock and fear as the killing curse sped towards the waiting man. As soon as he had fired the curse Sirius looked away, heartbroken. The act of betrayal from one of their number had just been erased but Peter had still chosen death over living with his pain, guilt and shame any longer.

The bright flash of green light was now half way to it’s target and everyone was now looking elsewhere, not wanting to bare witness to this course of action.

Now less than two seconds away Harry burst into action. With one swift movement Robert Longstreet was ripped out of his chair and thrown into the path of the speeding curse. Without enough time to even scream, the Death Eater collapsed into a lifeless heap at Peter’s feet. For several moments no one made a sound or opened their eyes until Peter cracked open one eye to look about and figure out how he was still alive. Looking down he found that reason and looked up to lock eyes with Harry. The intense green fire that was locked away within those eyes seemed to hypnotize him as he saw the great power and unimaginable suffering and grief that this young man had endured. Suddenly Peter just broke down completely, letting everything out as he dropped down to his knees weeping openly.

“I’m sorry Harry. I never meant for any of this to happen.” Harry walked up to the man and placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

“It is alright. There was no way to prevent what happened. If it hadn’t happened then Voldemort would not have been beaten and countless others would have died. As it is he had to wait thirteen years to come back. That I believe is worth two deaths, even if those deaths happen to be my parents. This is no one’s fault except for Voldemort and he has been taken care of.” This confused Peter a bit as he was not there for Harry’s little speech. He had been waiting in Dumbledore’s office since they had arrived at the school.

“What, he’s gone? For good this time? How?” And he asked many other questions back to back getting more and more excited as he went.

“Peter calm down! Yes he is gone for good. Harry here even gave a little speech where he presented his head to the students and professors.” Sirius informed him with a grin.

“Oh Harry, before I forget, Professor Flitwick would like you to teach him how you created those illusions.” Ginny told Harry. Everyone was a little thrown off by the sudden change in conversation and looked at Ginny dumbly as the tiny professor began hopping in anticipation.

“You know the rules Gin! He has got to steal the book himself! No help from you! You are going to have to get him inside my library but after that he’s on his own!” Harry told her sternly. Noticing that most people had looks of extreme confusion he explained.

“You see I have a very extensive library of books that I have composed myself over time. Within them contains nearly every spell, potion, or curse that has ever been used. As well as details of some very obscure and ancient forms of magic. While I was training the others they had free rein over my library. As long as they could get passed all of my traps. I wanted them to learn things on their own and think of those books as an absolute last option. After a few injuries they got the point and tried much harder.” After explaining Harry looked at the faces around him and concluded that most had no intention of going for his books. There were only two exceptions.

“Can we go now?” Harry was not at all surprised to see Hermione and Professor Flitwick standing with very excited looks on their faces.

“I will let you but first I want you to know what you’re getting into. The bottom line is that out of the many people I have allowed in there only one has ever come out unscathed. Come to think of it she did every time.” He added this last bit as an after thought. Everyone was a little shocked for a moment because they figured that this one person had been Dumbledore but the word ‘she’ threw that out. Across the room, unnoticed by anyone Tonks was beaming with pride at her accomplishment.

“Fine, fine, fine lets go!” Hermione stated as she and Professor Flitwick left following Ginny. As the door shut Harry, Albus, Luna, and Neville began laughing hysterically.

“They have no idea what they just got themselves into!” Neville informed everyone. At this Ron, Mrs. Weasley and Mr. and Mrs. Granger shot looks towards Harry.

“Harry if you get my girlfriend sent to the hospital wing, I swear that I will do my best to, um ah, to..” Trying as hard as he could Ron could not think of anything that he actually could do to Harry.

“Ron, everyone, I promise that no ‘serious’ harm will come to either of them. Then again Hermione could spend a month in the hospital wing and she would think it well worth the cost to get her hands on any one of those books.” He said with a smile. Everyone else found this rather amusing and had to admit that she would gladly pay any price to pick up some extra information. “Oh, Neville you better take this and get busy. Two drops each, no more.” Harry said while tossing Neville two vials full of a thick pinkish substance. Neville placed the potions in his pocket while his eyes welled up with tears. Walking across the room he enveloped Harry in a brotherly hug.

“Thank you Harry!” He managed to get out before he apparated away, shocking those that did not believe it was possible to do so on Hogwarts grounds.

“What was that stuff you gave him?” Ron asked Harry as he made his way to the door. After opening the door Harry looked back to give Ron his answer.

“The gift of life, Ron. The gift of life.” He answered sadly as he left the office. The next few months were probably going to be the hardest of Neville’s life. But when all is finished all will be right in his world, for the first time in his long life.

Nearly everyone watched Harry leave with confusion. Confusion; it seemed to them as if that was all there was lately. Very few knew what had actually just happened but by the looks of it Snape was quickly figuring it out. Everyone sat in silence for a few moments until Peter spoke up.

“You know for some reason I feel as if I have seen him before! I know he looks a lot like James but it’s just nagging at my brain. Like I should know him or something. Never mind, Stupid thoughts.” He finished with a sigh. Sirius and Remus shared a look with each other before they both fell from their chairs laughing while the others tried to hold back giggles. “Alright mutt face, what was so funny about that.” Both Marauders climbed to their feet and pulled Peter from his chair.

“Come on, we will explain it over a nice bottle of fire whiskey.” Remus said as they frog marched their old friend to the door.

Harry was on his way back up to the hospital wing, to check on Colin and Madam Bones, when he heard some rather loud voices coming his way. Curious as to who it was, he waited for them to come around the corner. When they did he was shocked, amused, and if he were honest with himself, a little scared.

“Ok it was not my fault. They got careless, reckless, impatient, and maybe a little greedy.....” And he went on and on and on. Albus and the others who were discussing the threat that Lord Maul poses were at a loss for words as Harry came bursting in giving excuse after excuse as to why this was not his fault. The only problem was that nobody knew what ‘this’ was.

“Harry, Harry, HARRY! Thank you! Now what is going on?” Professor Dumbledore asked politely although he was very anxious to find out what was going on.

“Um, well you see, Hermione and Professor Flitwick are in the Hospital wing.”

“WHAT!” Nearly everyone stood and Ron looked ready to murder Harry. “What happened?”

“Well that’s the thing, you see my library has many wards and booby traps that I used to test the others and they are always changing so someone would not be able to know what to expect.”

“Just get to the point!” Ron demanded.

“Well they weren’t able to figure out my wards and with all those books in view of the two of them it was like waving candy in the face of a diabetic. They decided to just charge in as fast as they could, grab as many books as they could, then charge back out. Well, things didn’t go as planned.” Harry said reluctantly.

“How bad are they hurt?” Tonks asked with concern falling from every word.

“That’s the strange thing. They have many injuries. Some are even pretty bad. But I don’t think that they even noticed.”

“What do you mean Potter?” Came the stern voice of Professor McGonagall.

“Just as I said, they didn’t notice. Or if they did, they don’t care. I came across them in the corridor on the second floor. They were both on stretchers trailing behind Ginny and looking as if they had just won the lottery. They both had a stack of books with them reading. Informing each other when they found something interesting. Ginny told me that she had not given them anything for the pain but they both seem to be in their own little heaven.” He told them quickly fully expecting Ron to start firing curses at him and Mr. and Mrs. Granger to give him a good tongue lashing. But to his disbelief everyone began to laugh, very loudly.

Several weeks had passed since the attack and demise of Voldemort and all seemed to be quiet. Those who had been injured were now healed, including Colin and Mrs. Bones. The news that Peter Pettigrew was alive shocked the wizarding community but the fact that he had spent fifteen years locked in the Malfoy’s dungeon while an imposter framed Sirius and indirectly framed Peter himself just served to confuse and totally baffle them. They accepted that both Sirius and Peter were innocent; they just did not understand how it happened no matter how many times it was explained. It was now the first Saturday of October and Harry and most others at Hogwarts was getting ready for the award ceremony that the ministry had prepared for many of those that had fought against Voldemort’s forces. Harry was in the process of trying to calm down a very excited, not to mention nervous Ron.

“Ron will you sit still for a moment! God you look like a man that is about to get married!” Ron just glared at him before he continued his pacing.

“Well Harry you and the others have nothing really to be nervous about. You already know you will be awarded the Order of Merlin First Class. But they did not tell those that would be awarded Second or Third class. We all just have to sit and wait to see if our name is called. Why not announce all the winners so people aren’t racking their brains, questioning their actions, wondering if they were good enough....” Harry got bored with line of conversation so he just toned it out and thought about the award that he asked to present himself. He did not have to really think about what he was going to say because in truth he knew the perfect words when he saw the young man fighting with all he had.

“Harry, are you even hearing what I am saying?”

“Come on Ron, we have to get to the Great Hall!”

Twenty minutes later the Great Hall was filled to capacity. At the front of the hall the normal staff table was missing and in it’s place was a row of ornately carved wooden chairs stretching the from wall to wall. The six in the center were obviously set for the winners of the Order of Merlin first class as Harry and the other heirs were

already seated. Harry was seated in the center with Albus and Ginny on his right side while on his left there was a chair that remained empty, and then came Neville and Luna. On either side of these six chairs were another five empty ones in each direction.

Off to the side was a podium that stood in front of the seats occupied by the Hogwarts staff and Ministry personnel. The four house tables were now closer together to allow for the extra room. The hall was filled with excited chatter about who would or would not win one of the other awards but this quickly died down as the Minister of Magic, Mr. Weasley, approached the podium.

“Thank you all for coming. As everyone knows of the attack on this great institution I will not bore you with my retelling of events, which would surely show my supreme lack of imagination.” Amused laughter rang through the great hall for a moment. After only one month in office Mr. Weasley had become one of the most respected and most loved ministers of magic Great Britain had ever had.

“For roughly one thousand years the Order of Merlin has been the highest award bestowed upon a witch or wizard who had distinguished themselves in times of adversity. For one to receive this award they must first be recommended. After that all control is taken out of our hands. The process is not unlike choosing the champions for the tri wizard tournament. The names of those recommended are placed into an enchanted goblet to be chosen. Those awarded first class are, for some reason, revealed immediately while the winners of second and third class are revealed during the award ceremony. So we will begin by presenting the awards for the Order of Merlin First Class.” Minister Weasley said proudly since his only daughter was one of the recipients. Mr. Weasley took a deep breath before he began.

“First, the Order of Merlin First Class is awarded to Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and heir of Merlin. He is also the only known person to receive this honor twice.” Professor Dumbledore rose to great applause and walked towards the podium. When the Headmaster reached his position Mr. Weasley bowed before handing the older man a golden plaque that had details of his heroic deeds engraved into it in a magnificent form of script. The aged wizard bowed back to his former student before he returned to his seat.

<I am not good at writing speeches so I will not have the winners give one since I have already taken too long to write this chapter due to having to think of three even though they are somewhat short>

This was repeated for Neville, Luna, Harry and Ginny in alphabetical order. Mr. Weasley almost broke down in pride when he called out his daughter's name. Malfoy sat at his table all the while with a look of pure disgust on his face. Not only for the fact that Harry and the others were being honored this way but also due to the number of his fellow Slytherins that were supporting them. The fact that no matter how hard he tried he was not able to get out of Harry's class didn't exactly help either. Everyone else however had looks about them of supreme nervousness. Everyone knew that the chances were against them but they could not help but feel nervous and hopeful that maybe they will also receive this honor.

After the five heirs had been presented with their awards a small table was

carried up to the front of the hall. Sitting innocently on top was a large gold and silver goblet that was adorned with ancient runes that seemed to be carved out of rubies and emeralds. The beauty of this ornate chalice had captivated the attention of all present as their eyes followed its progress forward. When the wizard levitating the table reached the front of the hall Mr. Weasley approached the table, wand in hand. With a few muttered words the goblet began to shower the area with brightly colored sparks for a moment before dying down once more. Everyone's attention was on this enchanted goblet and no one blinked as they waited with baited breath. After a few minutes many began to get restless once more but before anyone could voice their irritation sparks erupted once again from the goblet followed by a small sheet of parchment which Mr. Weasley quickly grabbed. Looking at the parchment Mr. Weasley allowed himself a grin before announcing the first name.

"Well it seems that this world has a sense of humor after all. The Order of Merlin second class is awarded to Mr. Sirius Black." He announced with a chuckle. Many in the great hall looked shocked and some even angered by this. They did not believe him to be a criminal any longer it was just that for the last month many within Hogwarts and the ministry had been subject to many pranks by Sirius and the other two Marauders. The students for the most part had fun with the pranks, the ministry on the other hand felt that it was disrespectful and that he should be punished. Mr. Weasley however refused to punish him believing that they were getting off light for his wrongful imprisonment. A few pranks is better than what most would do in such a situation.

Sirius approached the podium where he was presented a medal to go around his neck as well as a certificate. The medal was gold with an imprint of Merlin's face. Around the edges was an engraving of fig leaves and at the bottom it had his name and the date engraved in platinum. The engraving had been done magically after his name had emerged from the goblet. After thanking the minister Sirius turned and took a seat next to Luna Lovegood.

The other winners of the second class were Hermione, Professor Snape (who Harry recommended due to his spying as well as his excellent fighting skills and courage), Tonks and lastly Ron. Ron had nearly had a heart attack when his father had called his name. He was so shocked that he simply sat there frozen for a moment before Harry discretely used a bit of wandless magic to get Ron going. Mr. Weasley had tears in his eyes when he presented this prestigious award to his son. Never had he dreamed that not one but two of his children would receive this award at the same time. And he got to present it to them which made it all the more special for him. After Ron had taken the final seat on the left hand side of Harry and the other heirs the names of those for third class were being revealed.

The winners for the Order of Merlin third class were: Madam Bones, Professor Flitwick, Professor McGonagall, Percy Weasley, and Blasie Zambini. If Mr. Weasley had a look of pride for Ginny and Ron then it was elevated ten fold when Percy made his way to the front of the hall. The year before had been a hard time for the Weasley's, with Percy supporting Minister Fudge instead of staying loyal to his family. But that all changed during the summer when he realized that Fudge was intending to have Harry kept quite, permanently, and using him as a way to pull support from Dumbledore. He had gone back to the Burrow in mid July to beg his

family for forgiveness. His parents, sister and two older brothers did so easily but Ron and the twins took some time to be convinced of his sincerity.

After the final name had been announced many people became visibly upset. Not because they did not win but because they felt that a certain someone was left out. Someone that had fought harder than most. Several people were ready to voice their anger when Harry stepped up to the podium after shaking Mr. Weasley's hand. After a moment, standing in silence, Harry cleared his throat and began.

"I just want to thank everyone here for the support you have all shown these brave people tonight. But the presentation is not yet over. As you can see, there is still one empty seat. This award was left until the end partially because I asked to be the one to present it but mainly due to the tremendous amount of courage, willpower, and strength that this young man showed. He is without a doubt, the ultimate Gryffindor in his ideals.

Before the fighting began he expressed his belief to me that since he was afraid, that that meant that he was not as brave as I was. Well, everyone on the battlements was shown what real courage is. Even after taking five Cruciatus curses to prevent them from hitting others, including myself, he continued to fight on, saying that he would leave when we had won or when he was dead. Unknowing to him and everyone else, he was actually hit with Crucio nine times and a large number of other very painful curses, most of which were from yet again helping the others, before he had to be taken away. He fought with a power infinitely stronger than any Voldemort could ever have hoped to comprehend much less possess. He fought for the love he had of his friends, his family and the school he has come to know as a second home. And in doing so saved the lives of many of us here. For the last five years he has made no secret of the fact that he looked up to me as some kind of hero. Well, I can truthfully say that he is now a hero of mine. So it is my great pleasure to present the Order of Merlin First Class to Mr. Colin Creevy." As Harry finished the entire hall seemed to erupt in cheers and applause. A little shocked Colin rose slowly and walked up to the podium, tears running down his face, while other students were patting him on the back and chanting his name. When Colin reached the front of the hall he enveloped Harry in a brotherly hug before Harry continued.

"Now normally when a wizard receives this honor they are presented with a golden plaque that commemorates the deeds they have done, as myself and the others have received. But the first four winners of this honor received something else. Merlin himself presented the four founders of Hogwarts their swords, or in Salazar's case, his ax. Now someone else has been deemed worthy of THIS honor as well." Here he stopped which left everyone really confused as to what he was talking about until a brilliant white light seemed to engulf the entire hall. The light continued for many moments before it slowly began to fade away. Where once only Harry and Colin stood now stood two others. The first Tonks recognized as Forge but the second left her stumped for only a moment. At first she thought it was Professor Dumbledore until she noticed that he was still seated. Then she, slowly, put two and two together.

The assembled crowd was deathly silent as the two new arrivals looked around the hall in amusement. Or in Forge's case mischief. Many, and I mean many, that had no idea what was going on looked to Harry for an explanation before the old man

approached Colin and began to speak.

“Mr. Creevy I understand that young Harry here has informed everyone on the methods of his training with Forge here and his ‘abilities to go where and even when he must go to learn what he must.” When Colin dumbly nodded he continued. “Good, glad you understood it; I know an explanation like that could be pretty confusing to follow. Ok so where was I?”

“For gods sake Merlin! The years certainly haven’t improved your memory any young man. You have knowledge up the wahzoo but you still get easily side tracked and forget where you’re going in the conversation.” Forge suddenly snapped at Merlin although that same mischief was still alight in his eyes.

“Listen here Forge, or whatever your going by these days, I will string a conversation along anyway I choose. At the particular time I choose to add a little humor to what is probably a very awkward, confusing, and stressful moment for the young lad.” The students, teachers and Ministry officials were watching on in extreme amusement although they were still VERY shocked to see the greatest wizard who ever lived standing before them.

“You know Merlin at the moment your not exactly acting like the greatest wizard in history should?” Harry said a bit waspish, just knowing what this was going to lead to. Almost as soon as Harry said this Forge began to laugh hysterically. Merlin shot him a dirty look but was cut off from saying anything.

“Greatest wizard in history? He was one of my worst students! I imagine that Mr. Creevy will be a quicker learner.” This final comment seemed to go unnoticed by most present, except Colin who paled considerably having heard of Forge’s antics while training Harry.

“Alright children can we continue?” Harry’s question immediately pulled the two out of their little barb giving those in attendants the impression that Harry had to break up their debates before, and it wasn’t pretty for either of them.

“Ok where was I, oh yes! Just after the attack on your school Harry came to me to inform me of the victory and your part to play in that victory. With the help of my old friend Forge here I was able to watch the battle but more importantly the people in it. Though it is clear that with their training Harry here and the other heirs were by far the strongest in their abilities. YOU, however were by far the strongest in other ways.”

“You see during their training they fought many battles, some large some small. They are no stranger to death and fighting. You on the other hand, who had never drawn your wand on another wizard fought with all that you possessed, mentally and physically. Harry mentioned that you fought with love, but you also fought with fear. Not fear for yourself, but for fear that others would suffer if you had failed. Very few wizards, or muggles, have ever fought as bravely and as strong as you did. Five of them I presented with a weapon to help them in their struggle. Those five weapons are here now in the possession of those best suited for them. It is with great pride and honor that I present you with the sixth. A sword that I crafted myself, for you and you

alone.” Merlin finished as he held out the hilt of a magnificent sword for Colin to take only to find that he was no longer there. Looking around confused as to where the boy had gone, Merlin noticed the giggles of the girls and the snorts as the boys tried to prevent from laughing out loud.

“Oh, I guess it was a bit much to take in!” He commented with amusement as he noticed Colin lying unconscious.

Colin was sitting in a world of blackness for only a moment before he felt a sharp pain spread across the side of his face. Snapping his eyes open to see that he was sitting in a chair at the head of the Great Hall with Harry leaning over him with a huge grin plastered onto his face. “You alright there Colin!” As an answer he reached up and slapped Harry across the face in return of the slap Harry gave him. This surprised Harry for a moment but sent everyone else into hysterics.

“Yeah I’m fine but what the hell happened?”

“Oh, you don’t remember? Well let’s see, you were awarded the Order of Merlin first class. Merlin himself came to present you with a sword and then you passed out!” Harry answered quickly as Colin stood back up.

“Ah, thought so!”

“Alright now back to what I was saying. Mr. Creevy this sword was made especially for you and your descendents only. Just as the names of Gryffindor and others have lived on through the centuries I believe that one thousand years from now they will still be speaking your name.” Merlin finished with a smile as he once again held the hilt of the sword out for Colin to take. Unfortunately while he was presenting the sword neither Merlin nor Harry saw Forge making his way over to where the Weasley twins were chatting with the three marauders.

Taking the sword into his hand Colin got his first good look at the blade that was now his. The blade was excellently crafted with a metal like steel but he could tell that it was much stronger. The hilt was made with a combination of gold and platinum with a magnificent griffin engraved across one side of the cross guard and his name on the other. Inside the pommel rested a perfectly carved diamond about the size of a golf ball.

“Tha,,,, thank you!” Was all Colin managed to get out as he gazed at the weapon that was his and his alone. With Colin lost in amazement Merlin turned back to Harry.

“Well Harry I best be getting back to.....”

“BOOM”

Harry didn’t get a chance to find out what Merlin was going to say due to a loud explosion the shook the very foundations of Hogwarts.

Chapter Nineteen: The Blood of Jericho

Screams were heard throughout the hall as Harry and the others tried to find out what had happened. Looking around the smoke filled hall, the only thing odd was that Tonks was half sitting half falling out of her chair in an attempt to conceal her laughter. With a gentle probe of the room the whole situation became clear. With a smirk on his face and a wave of his hand he cleared the smoke to reveal a rather humorous sight.

Nearly every student as well as the reporters and ministry officials had ducked underneath the house tables. The professors and a few others had their wands out, scanning the hall for any threat. And in the center of it all was a very naughty, not to mention dangerous group. The Weasley twins, the three Marauders and Forge were standing close together and using each other to hold themselves up but not due to any laughter on their part.

It would seem the six of them had decided that this was a good time to play a little prank but something, or rather someone, went wrong. The group was covered, head to toe, with soot but there were some other rather exotic effects.

Apart from being completely decked out in Slytherin colors there was an assortment of additional appendages, overly enlarged eyes and other facial features, and then there was the clothes. Each one of them was now wearing small mini-skirts and short, tight tank tops. Their hair was long and tied up in pig tails. Overall they looked like really ugly disfigured Slytherin cheerleaders.

(Sorry I am no good at describing pranks)

After a few minutes the shock had worn off and the result was obvious. Pandemonium! The entire hall had erupted into laughter while the pranksters in question some how managed to compose themselves and look dignified which only made the situation all the more hilarious. But the laughter quickly died down as an infuriated Sirius march towards Harry as though he had been used to having five legs.

“POTTER....” Sirius quickly stopped and covered his mouth as a very high girlish voice came out of him but he soon recovered. “I can understand the legs, the hair; hell I can even deal with the skirt but to put Slytherin colors on your own godfather!” Harry just looked on in amusement as Sirius and the other attempted to glare at him.

“He’s right Harry, I mean I like Salazar, he’s a great guy, love him like a brother, but most of the students in his house are little bastards!” Turning towards the Slytherin table Forge continued. “Sorry if I offend anyone but most of you are little bastards!” His voice clearly said that he did not care if they took offence.

“Well as much as I would like to take credit for this, it was not me.” Sirius and the others were about to accuse him again when they caught site of Tonks. She was still laughing, apparently unaware that she was being watched. As comprehension dawned on them all six began stalking up to Tonks.

After finally catching her breath, Tonks looked up to see the six pranksters bearing down on her. "Aw hell!" Was all she said before she jumped out of her seat and darted for the door with the six deformed men floundered about after her with the explosive laughter and applause echoing throughout the halls!

"I'm going to go make sure they do not get into too much trouble." Harry informed his friends before heading out after them.

Colin was extremely relieved to find that the comment Forge had made about training him was only a little joke on his part. Much of his time outside of class was spent with Harry or with Tonks to train his abilities. It quickly became obvious that he preferred working with Tonks and he began to pity all the time the other heirs had spent training with Harry. Outside of these lessons Harry could be one of his best friends but when working it was all business.

Most of the student body were still surprised to see that Harry, Ginny, Luna and Neville were still attending every class, given their abilities, and still living in the dorms. But when asked they only replied with a simple, "There is always something else to learn."

"Harry I've been wondering something!" Ron suddenly said as they were leaving the armory one evening after Harry's class.

"And what is that Ron?"

"Well I was just thinking of the night of the attack! When you were explaining everything to the students that had chosen to stay and fight why did you leave out the part about how long you guys had really been training? Everyone, with the exception of the Order and the D.A., thinks that it was only a couple of months!" The question was directed at Harry but it was Ginny that answered.

"Ron how do you think everyone would react if they knew that in reality we were all several hundred years old?" Then with a quick glance at Harry she added, "Or more?" Harry snapped his head around glaring at her.

"You are just looking for trouble aren't you?"

"Harry you haven't been able to give me too much trouble for a long time now!" At this comment Harry stepped in front of her. Surprisingly she matched his glare with one of her own which was just as intense. Many of their friends began to back away quickly to avoid any injury that may come their way. Luna and Neville however looked a little annoyed and Professor Dumbledore looked amused.

Suddenly, just as the tension reached its height, their arms snapped up to meet the others. Everyone looked on in utter astonishment. Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley were waltzing down the corridor of the dark dungeons. Music was echoing throughout the corridors from some unknown source. Ron had to slap himself several times before he had to admit to himself that he was not imagining things.

"Oh Merlin, I wish they would stop doing that. It just irritates me every time they

do it.” Luna said while rubbing the bridge of her nose.

“I think that’s why they do it!” Neville responded.

“Ok, seeing Harry, of all people, dance is a little, ok well very strange, but what is so annoying about it.” Hermione asked after tearing her eyes away from her friends.

“Awhile back Harry got roped into going to some formal ball. And we all remember how far Harry’s talent for dancing extends. Anyway, I couldn’t dance to save my life and Luna and Albus refused to pull themselves away from their studies to come and help. So Ginny taught him. Unfortunately after he learned he found that he enjoyed it so Ginny taught him many more of the classical dances. Normally Ginny can’t stand to dance but while teaching Harry she really started to like it. Anyway, we could be having a completely serious conversation when suddenly for some obscure reason, known only to them; they will suddenly burst out in dance. Personally I think they do it just to annoy us.” Neville informed them in a low voice. Ron however still looked a little shocked.

“So Harry and Ginny are together now? Neither have said anything to any of us.” With this question even Dumbledore became annoyed.

“No! Those two are worse than you and Hermione! Everyone can see that they have very strong feelings for each other but they both refuse to admit it, even to themselves. Ron you have to talk to Harry about that. Maybe if you trick him into admitting it to you he will finally tell her.” Luna replied with disgust as Ron and Hermione blush a deep crimson red. Ron was about to protest Luna’s little task for him but something else caught his attention. In the background they could here the music suddenly change to a song that no one present could believe they were hearing.

“You have got to be kidding!” Neville almost shrieked. Turning around quickly he looked down the corridor to see Harry and Ginny slowly making their way towards them while dancing to the hokey pokey.

“Have those two gone crazy?” Due to their obvious loyalties to the light Blasie Zambini and a few other Slytherins were accepted into the odd, and rather small, group of Order and D.A. members that were privy to information that was denied to everyone else. Such as the true nature and time span of their training and their ‘experience’ in the ways of combat.

“Mr. Zambini I believe that both of them have been crazy most of their lives. But since they have grown closer together I believe that they have both gone completely insane!” Professor Dumbledore responded with the corners of his lips twitching up into a grin.

“You look like you had fun!” Hermione said wryly when Harry and Ginny rejoined them.

“Yeah, I did. You would not believe how much dancing actually helps out with your martial arts. Besides, it is really quite fun.” He replied with a wide grin. His behavior as of late has been a little bit strange but Ron was not able to put a finger on

it until now. Since the attack on Hogwarts Harry's demeanor had changed a little, just enough to make it obvious. Harry was happy. During his classes he was still all business and many were still terrified to approach him but while with his friends he could actually forget his troubles and enjoy the time that he had free.

Later that night Ron decided to ask Harry about his change of attitude.

"Harry, do you mind if I ask you a personal question?" Ron began as the two sat alone in the common room playing a game of chess. Harry looked deeply into his eyes for a moment before nodding. "I was just wondering what happened. I mean you seem so much happier now. I just wanted to ask you how you seemed to drop all of your worries." Harry sat in silence for a few minutes while contemplating his next move and thinking of a proper answer to Ron's question.

"I was gone a long time Ron! Many things changed and other things came up. I know what is coming. Many people will soon lose their lives and I know that I can not save them all. But as of this moment things are good. I have many very good friends, a grandfather and godfather that both love me and respect me. I was recently reunited with a woman that was one of the closest friends and the closest thing to a sister I have ever had, next to Hermione. Neville's parents are on their way to sanity and Remus is on the road moving towards a normal life. Right now life is good. It won't last nearly as long as I want it to but that is life and I am going to enjoy every moment I have before everything goes downhill. We just have to take what hand life deals us and hope to come out a winner. But hope will do you absolutely no good if that hope is not followed up by action. All the hope and all the faith in the world will do you no good if you can not rise above your fears. Do you understand what I mean?" Harry finished softly, fixing Ron with a piercing gaze that seemed to look right through him, directly into his soul. Ron just gaped at him and nodded as a reply.

He could not bring himself to believe that this was the same Harry he had known for many years now. The look of confusion and astonishment on his friends face almost sent Harry into hysterics. After Ron composed himself he leaned over the table surveying the board to plan his next move. "So what is going on with you and Ginny?" Looking up to see Harry's reaction to his question, Ron allowed himself a small smile. Harry for his part had not changed his expression at all with an exception of a slight change of his eyes. The change was so minute that most would have overlooked it. As a matter of fact you had to know Harry extremely well to know that that change meant anything at all much less what. "That's what I thought!" He added with his grin spreading across his face.

"Ron what are you talking about? Ginny and I are friends!" Harry stated while getting defensive. Ron however began to laugh.

"Harry you know perfectly well what I mean! When Luna and Neville first told me I had my doubts but the look in your eyes answered the question for me. You have become very good at hiding all signs of emotions from your face but your eyes betrayed you for a fraction of a second, but that was all it took." Ron informed him with a grin. Harry just sat there speechless for some time before saying anything.

"Hell Dumbledore can no longer read my expressions, how is it that you seem to

be able to?"

"Harry if someone asked what I did best, what would your answer be?" Ron replied laughing. Harry sat there confused for a moment before he glanced down at the chess board.

"Damn!" This only served to send Ron off into another fit of laughter.

"Harry I have been reading my opponents like an open book for most of my life. You could say that chess is like any fight or battle that you have fought. You have to anticipate your opponent's moves by reading their body language but most importantly their eyes if you plan to win. Besides, your reaction to this conversation is all the confirmation I need. You seem to have total control over all of your emotions except embarrassment, which you have never reacted well to. However, Ginny is my sister so out of brotherly duty I must warn you not to hurt her. Between my five brothers and myself, I think we could come up with something most unpleasant, even for you."

"Ron, will you please get it through your skull that Ginny and I, are just friends?" There was a very distinctive edge in Harry's voice but Ron was having too much fun to be intimidated.

"Harry the Halloween ball is two weeks away! You might as well ask her to go with you since you don't appear to be interested in," Ron gave a slightly exaggerated cough then continued. "Younger girls. And all the guys in the school are too terrified to ask her. They apparently feel that if they ask her and she gets upset that she will carve out their gizzards with her sword. That little display the five of you put on down on the grounds during the battle probably terrified the students and teachers as much as it did the Death Eaters. Then again I guess you could ask Cho, she doesn't seem to mind that your twenty thousand years old." Ron laughed as Harry gave him a hard look.

"Ron you are quickly developing the same love for extreme exaggeration that has the Marauders in trouble!" He told Ron pointedly.

"Oh, so what did you do to them?" Harry sighed in exasperation before answering.

"Nothing yet! Every time this week that I have had a time to really put them in their place they seem to disappear. I can't even find them. I swear they decide to go on a little vacation whenever I have an opportunity to give them my full attention." Ron could only wince at the vindictiveness in Harry's voice before he went back to the topic at hand.

"So are you going to ask her? If not I can do it for you if you like!" He offered with a lopsided grin.

"My god Ron, you are as bad as Luna and Neville!" Harry piped up, beginning to really get annoyed. Ron got the hint and changed the subject.

“Alright, calm down. I can tell when a slight conversational change is in order. So have you decided what you are going to do as way of an apology to my mum?” Harry cringed at the mention of Mrs. Weasley. To say she was shocked when she saw Ginny after the battle was a gross understatement. The verbal trashing she gave Harry for keeping her away from her family for so long had quickly gone down in Hogwarts legend due to the sheer ferocity and volume that was heard all throughout the castle and its grounds.

“You know Ron? Not too many things scare me, but of those that do, your mother is at the top of the list when she is really pissed.” Ron could only nod in agreement.

Harry was lying restlessly in bed that night thinking of his conversation with Ron and the many more one sided talks he had had with Luna, Neville or Albus over the years. He could not possible have feelings for Ginny. She was merely a very good friend so why was he letting what they thought get to him so much. The more he thought about the more annoyed he became with the thought of some other guy asking Ginny to the Halloween Ball.

“Damn it!” He nearly shouted as he threw his comforter off and rolled out of bed. “I need some fresh air!” Harry walked quietly towards the window as he slowly released his wings. He quickly threw the window open and jumped out, while using a bit of wandless magic to silently close it again.

He was rapidly descending towards the darkened grounds as he felt the cold night air running sharply over his face. A mere five feet from the ground Harry flared his wings and pulled up sharply to level himself off as he glided across the grounds with his hand brushing across the grass. He absolutely loved the feeling of flying without the aid of a broomstick. His old Firebolt was excellent but nothing could beat this. He lifted himself higher and raced over, around and between the many towers and archways that Hogwarts housed. With the wind rushing through his hair and over his bare torso Harry let out a deep sigh of contentment. No feeling on earth could compare with the swift beating of his wings as he shot through the air at incredible speeds. When the muscles in his back and across his chest began burning, he flared his wings and landed gracefully atop the north tower.

Harry stood calm as the icy wind whipped around him and pulled the trees of the forbidden forest this way and that. Gazing up at the night sky, watching as the moon illuminated the passing clouds, Harry began thinking once again about the coming conflict. He was not sure if he would be able to win or not, if so, it would come with a very heavy price, if not, then he will have damned the future. Not just the immediate future, but also the far distant future. If either himself, Luna, Neville or Ginny were to fall in battle than the light would be denied the coming of the one person that will be able to defeat the darkness for all time. It was a lot to have on your shoulders. Granted it would take something pretty extreme to take any of them down but it was still possible. With Ginny having such a large family, if she were to fall the Hufflepuff line would still go on. As well with Neville, since his parents were recovering there was still the possibility that they would have another child. However Luna’s case is different. Since it was her mother who was of Ravenclaw blood any chance of another heir should Luna fall was impossible.

All five family lines MUST go on or all hope was lost for the future. While thinking of his own situation with a small smile he was suddenly pulled from his thoughts.

“What are you doing up this late?” The sudden break in silence shocked Harry so much that he nearly fell off the tower it’s self. Turning sharply he came face to face with a giggling Ginny Weasley.

“What are you doing here?” He asked sharply. He did not find the situation the least bit funny and his previous train of thought did not help to better his mood. But Ginny did not pick up on the fact that Harry apparently did not want company at the moment. Well she probably did but just didn’t care.

“I couldn’t sleep so I was out flying and saw you up here, so I thought I would come up and say hi. You must have been thinking of something pretty heavy for me to be able to get up here without you noticing. So what were you thinking about so hard?” She inquired, not the least bit put out because of Harry’s short ‘greeting’. As much as he tried he could not stay mad and let out a long sigh.

“The usual.”

“Ah yes. Harry Potter, ever the pessimist.” She replied wryly.

“Realist Ginny!” Harry corrected her. “What you optimists call pessimism, we call realism.”

“Really! Harry you have spent how many centuries now on this earth? And even after all these years you still look for the worst in people!” She snapped back. Apparently this was a debate that they have had before.

“Human nature Ginny. If there is one thing I have learned, it is that if a fight is coming people will always look to someone else to protect them, to fight for them. People want peace but there are few who will fight for it. They would rather hide and pretend nothing is going on while others are being slaughtered due to lack of supplies or man power. And later when peace has finally come, those same people will thump their chests and proclaim proudly ‘what a brave stand ‘we’ made’. I have seen the same in many lands through many wars. Like I said, ‘people are sheep’, and shepherds are few.

Voldemort ravaged this country for many years and few stood up to him. When he returned everyone turned a blind eye because they were too frightened to admit that it was true. And in the end it was the students of this school who took a stand. A stand their parents would not take. And Voldemort’s army broke its back against the walls of this school. Students, children, stood up when adults coward.” Harry stopped for a moment before he continued and surprisingly Ginny did not interrupt him.

“Now we have another war coming. One that will be far worse. Many outside these walls will follow our classmate’s example but they will still be looking towards Hogwarts for guidance and I believe that it will be these same students that will

ultimately win this war as well. We may be the ones to lead this fight and to put Lord Maul into a shallow grave but it will be them that wins it.” When Harry finished his eyes were misty and Ginny was looking at him in a strange way that made him feel a little uncomfortable. They stood there in silence for a while just staring at each other. In this time Harry got his first good look at her since she arrived. Her hair, that had become darker over the time of her training and was now more a dark auburn rather than the notorious flaming Weasley red, was pulled back tightly in a ponytail that reached down to her waist.. Her dark brown eyes showed great wisdom yet had a mischievous glint to them. Standing nearly five foot ten inches tall her body was lean and toned due to rigorous training sessions the she preformed each morning and evening. She was wearing tight muggle jeans and a blue tank top that exposed her creamy white stomach and left little else to the imagination.

At the same time Ginny was in her own thoughts about Harry. She had always thought of him as attractive and had a huge crush on him but truthfully she did not really get to know him until after she had begun training with him and she realized that he was without a doubt the most powerful and most complicated man she had ever known or probably ever will for that matter. She refused to admit to anyone let alone herself that she still had any feelings for him that went any deeper then friendship but as she moved her eyes over his exposed chest and stomach, then up to meet his eyes she started thinking differently. Unconsciously, she took a step closer towards him as he did the same. She almost threw herself at him when a movement down below caught her attention. Directly below them someone was making their way quickly towards the Forbidden Forest.

“What the hell!” Apparently Harry had noticed as well.

“Who could that...?” Ginny had started but broke off as Harry raised his hand. He began looking around almost frantically.

“Something is very wrong here!” After pausing for a moment his eyes grew very wide. “FLY! GET THAT SON OF A BITCH, I WANT HIM ALIVE!” He grabbed GINNY tightly by the shoulders and with the help of some wandless magic threw her high into the air above the school grounds where she changed into the form of a hawk. Harry spread his wings and launched himself off the tower but it was too late.

“BOOM”

Ginny shot through the air at an incredible speed racing into the forest. It took all of her will power to keep from looking back and seeing what had been done. As she entered the forest she could see the figure ahead of her, rushing this way and that as if he could not make up his mind. She was on him within seconds. She changed form in mid air and dropped on the intruder, knocking him to the ground. Harry said he wanted him alive, well he didn’t say unharmed so Ginny decided that she was going to enjoy this. She began stalking towards her prey but as he turned over Luna froze in shock. From underneath the man’s hood she could see the tell tale flaming red hair.

‘Harry all you alright?’ She, using telepathy, called out desperately.

‘Uh, ah, yeah , a little fucked up but I’ll be alright. Did you get him?’ His

response came slow and was strained but there was also a cold anger building up inside of him.

‘Yes but you are not going to like it. Harry its Percy. He looks really shabby and has the look of a fanatic in his eyes!’ Ginny said really fast in an almost defeated tone, sounding as though she would burst into tears at any moment. There was a few moments of shocked silence but when Harry’s voice came again it was colder than Ginny had ever heard.

‘Bring him up to the castle quietly and stay out of sight. Stick him in Gryffindor’s chamber then come back out here to help to look for the dead and survivors.’

‘How bad is it?’

‘I’m not sure yet. The blast was centralized on the north tower. The battlements on either side were hit pretty hard but the tower is gone.’ Ginny’s heart plummeted as she realized that they would not walk away from this one without casualties. After Firenze had returned to his herd the divination class had returned to the north tower where Professor Trelawney still preferred to remain in isolation. The old woman was not her favorite professor, not by a long shot, but she had never done anything to deserve losing her life. She was just full of hot air.

‘Alright I will be there soon. What’s the password?’ With that said Ginny quickly stunned Percy and began moving him up to the school.

Fifteen minutes later Ginny was running through the corridors towards the entrance hall. With her thoughts racing as they were she had completely forgot that she could have simply apparated back out on to the grounds. The halls were thick with students that were moving around much like panicked sheep with no professors to keep them calm as they were all outside helping Harry dig through the rubble. When she had finally made it outside she could only stare in horror.

The north tower it’s self was spread over a large area of the surrounding grounds where it had fallen. The castle walls on either side were all but nonexistent and you could clearly see the inside corridors and classrooms through the thick dust that hung in the air. The professors and many students, covered in soot and dust, were quickly moving the heavy stone blocks and wooden beams from where they had fallen, desperately hoping to find someone but then praying that they didn’t. Madam Pomfrey was off to the side treating the wounds of two students that she recognized as Hufflepuff prefects that had apparently been on their rounds when the explosion had taken place.

‘Harry where are you?’

“Coming up behind you!” Ginny spun on her heel as the words registered in her head and the sight before her shocked her to no end. Harry was levitating himself over to her due to the fact that his legs were a mangled mess and could not possibly support his weight. His arms, chest and stomach were covered in gashes, scrapes, bruises and burns. What shocked her most however were his wings. They seem to

have lost most of their feathers and the left wing was nearly ripped clean off, hanging limply at his side with the tip grazing the ground. His face however held almost no recognition of the pain he must have been feeling, instead it was red with intense fury and his lips were curled up in a very good impersonation of a wolfish snarl.

“Alright Luna, you and Neville take over here. Ginny, go get Ron and Hermione. Albus you better go and bring Mr. and Mrs. Weasley. Get them here as fast as you can. I will meet you all outside of Gryffindor’s chamber.” Harry ordered in a bellow. He began making his way back into the castle when he was stopped by a very stern looking Madam Pomfrey.

“You are not going anywhere Mr. Potter until I have a look at you and heal at least some of the most serious of your wounds.”

“I’m sorry Madam Pomfrey but you will not be able to heal me. With the extent of my injuries I am going to have to go through a forced burning to heal them.” Albus, Ginny, Luna and Neville cringed when he said this. Harry was always in a pretty foul mood the day after a burning but a forced burning made his temperament far worse.

So now Harry was ‘floating’ through the corridors with the eyes of the shocked students following him as they took stock of his injuries.

“Oh did poor little Potty get hurt?” Not being in the mood for his witty banter, Harry simply flicked his wrist and Malfoy found himself pinned about halfway up the wall, unable to move. He reached the third floor, soon after his ‘meeting’ with Malfoy, where he heard Ron and Hermione badgering Ginny about why they were there.

“Damn it Ginny! What the hell are we doing here? This corridor always makes me nervous!” Ron exclaimed with no small amount of agitation in his voice.

“I already told you. I do not know what is going on exactly so I am not going to start speculating. All I know is that the person who is apparently responsible for the attack is in there. We have to wait for everyone else this concerns so be patient. He told me to bring you here and for Albus to go get mum and dad. That is all you need to know for the moment. And as for this corridor, Fluffy no longer lives here so what is the problem?”

“Well this is where Harry’s library is!” Although it was dreary night where at least one had lost their life, Hermione could not help but be excited about being in the presence of all those books again. Ron however ignored her comment.

“Wait a minute, why would Harry want mum and dad brought here? Dad I can understand with him being the Minister of Magic and all. But why mum?”

“That question will be answered when your parents get here Ron, not one moment before.” The three students spun around rapidly to see Harry approaching them slowly. Gasps of surprise and horror were released from Ron and Hermione as they slowly took in their friend’s rather ‘disheveled’ appearance.

“Sweet Merlin!” Ron could do absolutely nothing but nod his head in agreement

to Hermione's whispered exclamation. "Harry you have to get to the hospital wing now before you bleed to death!"

"No, Madam Pomfrey can not help me. And I used a few charms; the rest of my blood is staying where it belongs. Which I guess is a good thing since I won't have Filch screaming for me to scrub all of my blood of the floors." Neither Ron nor Hermione seemed very satisfied with this response.

"But then how are you going..." Ron was suddenly cut off as Ginny raised her hand.

"You don't want to know Ron, trust me." She told him as she seemed to shiver. Just the thought of burning alive every six months was bad enough but having to force it, according to Harry, was much more painful.

So they stood there in silence. Each with their own thoughts and emotions washing over them. Two with the utmost confusion as to why their friend had brought them there and two with rage and sadness pulsing through their veins. How could they have been so wrong about Percy? From the moment he had come to Hogwarts with his brothers, to help defend against the attack, had he been playing a game? Digging for information?

Harry was pulled out of these thoughts however as Professor Dumbledore and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley had joined them.

"Merciful heavens!" Mrs. Weasley exclaimed as she took in Harry's appearance. "What in the name of all that is holy have you been doing? Why are you even up and about? You must go to the hospital wing at once!" Mrs. Weasley was cut off from her typical triad as everyone else began to laugh. She was famous for using her world renowned temper to mask her dreadful fear of losing one of her children. And she had certainly grown to think of Harry as one of her own over the years. A fact that made Harry feel very good about himself, even at his age.

"What the hell are you laughing at? Have you lost your minds?" Even Harry, who had been silent up until now, shrank back at the sheer volume of Mrs. Weasley's voice.

"Mrs. Weasley calm down. I will be perfectly alright by morning. However we are here for something more important. Just before the explosion Ginny and I saw someone running from the base of the north tower towards the forest. I threw Ginny clear of the blast and she was able to capture him before he got very far. The reason I asked for you to meet me here is because, um, well..." Harry continued to stumble over his words.

"Harry will you get on with it?" Hermione nearly screeched. Giving up on simply trying to explain with words Harry walked to the wall behind Ron.

"Supercalafragalisticxpealidoshus!" With that said the wall began to open revealing a chamber behind the wall. Turning towards his companions he was met with stunned faces.

“You have got to be kidding me!”

“No Hermione, I am not kidding you. Ginny decided that since she used her time to teach me to dance that I had to go watch Mary Poppins with her. She thought it looked cute and wanted to see it. It was the first time I had watched it really, it’s actually pretty good. But anyway, I was changing the password here and thought that this would be perfect. Besides the password will only work for me and those I tell it to. Although you heard it, it won’t work for you because I did not tell you directly.” And he went on and on and on.

“Ok Harry, now your stalling. Lets just go inside so you can tell use what the hell is going on.” Harry lowered his head in defeat and led them inside after lowering the wards he had placed on the room. The sight that greeted them was not what they expected.

It looked a good deal like the Gryffindor common room with small tables, chairs and couches scattered about. Above the massive fireplace was a Muggle painting of the four founders standing outside Hogwarts after the construction was complete. Being a muggle painting, it did not move which confused Ron. This painting was the only one in the room due to the fact that the rest of the walls were completely covered by massive book shelves that reached from floor to ceiling. The ceiling was enchanted, much like the Great Hall, and had candles floating about in the pattern of a grand chandelier. Then their eyes fell on Percy.

“Percy!” Mrs. Weasley cried out as she rushed to her son who was being restrained by a full body bind. “What is the meaning of this?” She turned towards Harry as he lowered himself into a large plush armchair where he was out of Percy’s sight. Harry took a deep breath and let out a heavy sigh before he answered.

“I’m sorry Mrs. Weasley but Percy is the man Ginny and I saw running into the forest and it goes without saying that he is the man Ginny captured after the explosion.” Everyone gasped as Mrs. Weasley’s face went white as she shook her head in denial.

“No, no it’s not possible. You just made a mistake!” She cried as she looked down at her son, who’s eyes were darting around the room.

“Harry, Molly, perhaps it would be best if we were to question the boy!” This was obviously a statement not a question or request. As everyone else just looked on in shock Harry nodded his head and partially lifted the binding charm, giving Percy the ability to speak, which in hindsight did not look like a very good idea.

“Release me at once or my master will destroy you all.” It is amazing how one little sentence could rip the spirit out of a woman as strong and tenacious as Mrs. Weasley. Tears began falling down her face as she tried to convince herself that she had heard him wrong. Aurther Weasley came up behind his wife and led her to the far corner of the room as Professor Dumbledore took her place. He surveyed his former Head Boy through his half moon spectacles.

“Can you tell me why you did this Mr. Weasley?” He asked solemnly.

“Because my master wished it. Because everybody else were cowards and not willing to take such high risks. And now I will be honored above all others when my master comes for me.” Percy snapped back with so much animosity in his voice. Albus nodded sadly, rose from his seat and made his way towards Harry.

“Harry there is something strange about this!” The aged professor stated as he took a seat opposite from Harry. Harry who was lost in his own thoughts jerked to attention at the sound of the familiar voice.

“What do you mean?”

“Well before I thought that perhaps he was being controlled somehow by a curse of potion but I found nothing I recognized but there is something nonetheless.” Harry levitated himself up from his chair and made his way over to the couch just as Ron was about to slaughter Percy for running his mouth.

“SHUT UP!” Percy’s head turned swiftly and his face became deathly white as he noticed Harry Floating there. He began mumbling incoherently and started shaking. Harry sat down next to the couch and simply observed Percy as he shook with apparent fright. Slowly it seemed comprehension was dawning on Harry. At first his face grew troubled as if trying to remember something important. Then his eyes grew wide.

“This can’t be! It’s not, it’s just not possible!” He whispered. His comments were heard by all in the room but he paid them no mind. He continued stating that it was impossible as he moved from one end of the room to another with the eyes of everyone on him as he drifted by. This continued for half an hour until he could deny it no longer. “Blood of Jericho!” He choked out as he gazed at the confused faces of those around him.

“Blood of what?” Ron was confused, which was nothing new these days but it still irritated him.

“Blood of Jericho! It is a potion that, ah, I created while I was looking for a stronger truth serum than those currently available. After a battle I had taken part in I used a few of the prisoners to test it. One of which was a man that was trained by Forge and I, and he used that knowledge to aid the dark side, so I was only to happy to use it on him. Well it turned out to be much stronger than I anticipated and instead of them simply speaking the truth they became completely obedient to me. It basically turned them into willing slaves. They would do anything I told them to do. Obviously this was very disturbing.” Harry took a few deep breaths as everyone took in this information. He had an irrational fear that they would all blame him for this and refuse to have anything to do with him.

“Ok so you created the potion, is there an antidote?” Mr. Weasley asked desperately as he held his sobbing wife in his arms. Shaking his head Harry answered.

“No, there is no antidote. The research I did on it and it’s effects after testing it

came to only one conclusion. The only way to rid the body of it's effects is to subject the body to extreme pain." He hung his head after stating this and hearing Mrs. Weasley break out into a new wave of tears.

"Harry I want you to know that we do not blame you for this. And you shouldn't blame yourself." Harry looked dumbly at Ron after he said this.

"What, what do you mean?"

"Don't give me that crap Harry, I know how you think. Right now your worried about what is going to happen to Percy and you think we will all blame you for this happening. And as for you blaming yourself, well everyone knows you do that weather you could control the situation or not so don't start wallowing around in self pity."

"What did you mean that the only way to break the potions effects was through extreme pain?" Hermione asked curiously.

"Unlike most curses and potions Blood of Jericho attacks nothing but the brain and nervous system and basically takes them over. The pain inflicted on a person, if great enough, will take that control away in favor of fighting the pain on a more instinctual level. However the risks are very high. Of the three prisoners one died another lived out his life as a vegetable and the third, who betrayed Forge, went completely insane and ran off. When myself and a friend of mine got within ten yards of him he threw himself off a cliff. Now if he goes insane or his brain damaged in any way I can fix that. but since there is a possibility of death I'm going to have to ask for permission before I do anything."

"Please Harry do something, anything!" Mrs. Weasley shrieked as she jumped up and pulled Harry into a bone crushing hug. The pain he felt run through all his would was nearly unbearable but he did not try to pry her off, he simply returned the embrace and gritted his teeth. After he had been released he looked down at the woman he had begun to think of as a mother.

"I'm sorry but I'm going to need Percy's permission!" Everyone looked shocked at this statement and many were left gaping or sputtering.

"What do you mean, how are you going to get young Mr. Weasley's permission?" Dumbledore asked looking just as confused as everyone else. In answer to his question Harry produced a vial of his favorite truth potion from the folds of his robes.

"One of the reasons this stuff works so well is because it is looking for answers on a subconscious level, where everything is truth. Percy is still in there although his consciousness has been tampered with his subconscious is the same. You can't tamper with that no matter how good you are. If the answers he gives are different than that which Percy would normally give it will come up a lie and, well you know." He finished as he made his way back over to Percy. Due to the body bind administering the potion was fairly easy. After placing a silencing charm on him, so that he could not interrupt or avoiding hearing him, Harry began explaining the situation.

“Now Percy would you like me to attempt to return you to normal?” He asked after removing the silencing charm.

“I am perfectly normal you mother...” the scream that pierced the room was thunderous in pitch and volume and lasted for what seemed like an eternity.

“I will take that as a yes!” He was about to go on but suddenly stopped as if struck by a sudden stroke of genius. “This might be quicker and easier than I thought. I was going to use the Cruciatus curse due to the amount of pain it inflicts but all I have to do is use this truth potion. It’s five times more painful and since it is not sent directly into the brain there is not nearly as much chance that there will be brain damage. Which I guess is a good thing since my potion is not illegal. Well, yes it is but no one knows that it is a forbidden potion. You might want to wait outside, Percy is not going to look pretty and the last thing someone needs to see is a friend torturing a family member.” By the look in his eyes it was clear that this was not a request or suggestion and surprisingly no one argued, not even Mrs. Weasley.

“Luna just now gave you the idea about using the potion instead of the Cruciatus curse didn’t she?” Ginny smirked as she walked passed.

“Oh just get your ass out!” Harry huffed as Ginny started laughing. After everyone had left Harry reclaimed his seat and looked at Percy who was looking at him with terror in his eyes. “So Percy lets have a chat. Since I am going to have to put you through this anyway I might as well get something out of it. Weather or not you will remember any of these things after you ‘wake up’ I don’t know so might as well get some information. First off, I’m dying to know the answer to this question. How did Lord Maul get his hands on the instructions to brew my potion?”

“I, I don’t know!” Percy sputtered back. Harry was very put out by this answer but hid it well.

“How long has it been since you were given the Blood of Jericho?” Harry decided that he would start off asking simple questions that did not seem to be all that important. Although the truth potion made him feel a strong compulsion to answer Harry’s questions, he wanted to take it easy and move slowly for the benefit of the ‘real’ Percy’s mental and emotional stability.

“It was given to me two weeks after the presentation for the Order of the Phoenix awards.” Came his answer in a confident voice.

“Alright here is another question. How many others were given this potion?” This was the question that Harry probably wanted answered most.

“I don’t know!” Harry somehow knowing this was a lie quickly cast a silencing charm to cover the loud piercing scream.

“Now lets try that again shall we? How many others?”

“Only one! There was not enough potion for more!” Harry nodded his

acceptance of Percy's answer and continued.

"What is Lord Maul's real name?" While Harry asked this question he was unconsciously gripping the seat of his chair where he was leaving marks indented into the bottom of the solid oak chair in the shape of his fingers.

"I don't know and I don't care. My lord did not see fit to tell me that so I will ask no questions of him." Percy snapped. His eyes were alight with great hatred as he glared at Harry but quickly diverted his eyes as if afraid Harry would kill him right where he sat. Deciding he would not get much useful information out of Percy, Harry decided to just ask a series of questions Percy was simply unable to answer truthfully due to his current condition. It was not true that he loved everything about Lord Maul but because of the Blood of Jericho he was unable and unwilling to say anything different.

And so the questioning continued for the better side of two hours before there was any change so when it happened it took Harry by surprise. "Do you love Lord Maul?" Harry asked wearily. Percy looked to be strained as he tried to answer.

"N, I, no." It took Harry a few moments to comprehend what he had just said but when it came to him his head shot up so swiftly he thought he might have pulled something.

"Percy? Are you ok?" As if in answer to his question Percy lifted his hands up from their position at his sides and began to rub his face. After a moment he let out a humorless chuckle.

"I can't believe I am going to say this, but Harry I think you should ask a few more questions, I don't think I have total control yet." Harry's jaw almost dropped. Someone was actually telling him to put them through that some more. Granted it was something that needed to be done but, damn.

"Um, ok!" And so it continued for another fifteen minutes before it was finally over. Harry used a bit of wandless magic to remove the effects of his truth potion, 'I really should find a name for it,' he thought as Percy's body relaxed against the couch. He was covered in sweat and his face was a ghastly white color with a green ting to it. His muscles seemed to be twitching as he lay there with his breathing coming slow and raspy. Harry was disappointed as he could tell by the look in his eyes that he did not remember much of what happened. He was pulled from this thought however as Percy turned his head towards and actually saw Harry with a clear head for the first time that night.

"My god Harry, you look like crap!" Harry could do nothing but give a short snort of amusement.

"You don't exactly look like a bunch of roses yourself!"

"Yeah I guess your right. So what was this all about?" Percy was obviously confused about a great many things that had happened and wanted answers. Ron and the other Weasley's that were there that night made it clear that they did not blame

Harry for what happened but Percy was the one that would have to live with the things he had done while under the potions control. He listened as Harry explained everything that had happened and the exact nature and origin of the Blood of Jericho. To say he was surprised is a slight down play on facts.

“Ok if this potion is this powerful than why haven’t people heard of it before now?” It was a legitimate question and the answer was moving around like a freight train inside Harry’s head. It should have been impossible for it to just show up out of no where.

“The reason no one knows about it is because after I tested it and found it’s exact nature I destroyed all that I had and burned my notes. Hell the only place you could possibly find it is in my own personal potions book and all of my books are heavily guarded.” With all that he had just been told, Harry was surprised at what Percy had to say next.

“Shouldn’t you be in the hospital wing or something?” He asked looking at Harry curiously.

“No I’m just going to go set myself on fire! Feel free to use the bed in the other room. When you fall asleep you will probably be out for a couple days and if you go to the hospital wing Madam Pomfrey will probably insist you stay in bed for several days after you wake.” He told him as he was moving to the far wall.

“Um, what other room?” Looking around the room he could find nothing but bookshelves covering every square inch of wall with the exception of the fireplace of coarse. Harry simply turned and waved his hand and one of the bookshelves simply disappeared.

“Ah, ok. Wait aren’t you going to need it?” Percy asked worriedly. He was grateful of coarse but he didn’t want to impose.

“No I won’t need it! Flames and bed sheets aren’t exactly compatible!” Harry replied as he moved through another opening, that had just appeared, into a room that was completely bare. After closing the ‘door’ Harry situated himself on the floor in the center of the room. He began to force the fire up into him, pulling the heat in from all around. As the force of the flames built up Harry began thinking about how Lord Maul could possibly have gotten hold of this potion.

The heat was rising in him and white hot fire flowed through his veins as he turned everything over in his head. He knew for a fact that his book was the only reference in the world on that particular potion and his book was one of a kind. At this thought Harry’s head snapped up and one word escaped passed his clenched teeth before he burst into flames.

“SNAPE!”

The following afternoon most of the Hogwarts students and teachers were gathered in the Great Hall for lunch. The vast majority had missed breakfast due to the late night the castles residents had had as a result of the attack that left the north

tower in ruins and one professor seriously injured. Professor Trelawney was found nearly dead at the bottom of the rubble early that morning and taken to the hospital wing. Professor Dumbledore had informed the students that her injuries were severe but she was going to pull through.

Ron, Ginny, Hermione and Neville were sitting quietly at the Gryffindor table, all anxious for word about Harry and Percy. Just about everyone had tried to get into Gryffindor's Chamber to see if anything was wrong but just as Harry had told them, the password would not work for them. It seemed that the only one able to open it was Ginny, but she absolutely refused to do so, saying that Harry gave her the password to put Percy in there, nothing more. She claimed it would be wrong for her to use that information for anything beyond that which Harry had intended. Although she desperately wished to enter as well.

Naturally, this pissed everyone off. So there they sat in absolute silence.

"What the hell was Harry thinking? He could at least have let us know if everything was fine or not. But no he just finished up and went and burned himself while we are all sitting here on our thumbs worrying." Ron suddenly spoke up, breaking the silence.

"Ron I'm sure he had a good reason. After all he must have been in an awful lot of pain with all his injuries. I can't blame him for not taking the time to let us know before doing that." Hermione interjected.

"Pain my ass! He's been hurt worse than that before!" Ginny was about to continue when she was waved into silence by Neville.

"Ginny I have only seen Harry worse than that once. I'm sure you remember that day, and the mood he was in afterwards!" For a moment Ginny looked confused but she began to shiver as the thought of those memories. Hermione and Ron on the other hand were completely clueless.

"Um, what are you talking about?" Ginny and Neville began shifting about nervously. Obviously they do not like thinking about it and like talking about it even less.

"Well Harry had taken all of us to China to see an old friend of his, Sun Yi. He was the emperor at the time. Well anyway we were just walking about the countryside when we came upon a young griffin that was out playing. Harry being who he is began playing with it." At this point Neville stopped and Ginny picked up the story.

"Harry decided to go for a little flight with him and while they were in the air a group of about twenty soldiers began firing arrows at them. They both got hit a couple of times and began falling to the ground. Harry regained his senses and tried to help the young griffin. Well the griffin was panicking and inadvertently began tearing his talons into Harry. When they hit the ground the griffin was dead and Harry looked more like a shredded piece of beef you would see at a butchers shop." Both Ron and Hermione looked horrified at what they were being told and paid close attention as Neville finished off for Ginny.

“Harry was, um, well very pissed. When he got off the ground and made his way over to the soldiers he was just radiating power. They could do nothing but stand there and gawk at Harry who still had two arrows in him and numerous wounds from the terrified griffin. It wasn’t much of a fight. Harry simply devastated them. One or two got away and the next thing you know Harry was known as the Angel of Death as well as his numerous other nicknames.” When Neville finished Ron and Hermione were staring at him in utter disbelief.

“Harry actually did that?” Ron asked completely flabbergasted.

“Yes he did! We would have helped but we didn’t catch up in time.” This last comment certainly shocked their friends and they were about to comment when the doors to the Great Hall burst open.

Everyone turned to see a very pissed off Harry Potter striding swiftly up towards the head table. His friends were about to ask him what was wrong but quickly shrank back as he passed them they noticed the green fire that seemed to live perpetually in his eyes burned hotter and brighter than ever. His steps were long and swift and it quickly became evident that this was one of the Professors that would be on the receiving end of his wrath. All those at the head table began to dig through all their recent memories to make sure they had done nothing to bring the boy down on them.

When Harry reached the front of the hall many professors breathed a sigh of relief as he began marching directly towards Professor Snape. Stopping in front of the potions master Harry did not speak nor did he give Snape time to. He simply reached across the table and grabbing the front of his robes Harry lifted him out of his chair. With a strong pull Snape was lifted over the staff table and literally thrown ten feet where he landed on the Hufflepuff table.

“Don’t speak, don’t even move. If you do I will kill you, do you understand me?” Harry’s voice was colder than anyone had ever heard it before and quite frankly it terrified everyone, even the other heirs who have seen Harry lose his temper on many occasions.

“Harry, may I ask what is wrong here?” Professor Dumbledore asked cautiously as he slowly moved towards the two men. Harry for his part never took his eyes off Snape nor did he answer. He just locked his eyes with Snape’s, pure hatred pouring out of every pore in his body. Slowly his eyes began to lose their edge and his brow tightened in confusion.

“Harry...”

“Son of a bitch!” Harry exclaimed as he quickly stunned Snape. Turning towards Professor Dumbledore he began to speak quietly so only he could hear him. “Percy is perfectly fine, he will be sleeping for a few days but that’s about all. Now I was thinking about this and came to a conclusion. After I first tested this potion I destroyed what I had left and burnt my notes. The only place it is written down is in my potions book. I gave Snape a copy of it so he would know of its existence as well.” Albus was shocked to say the least.

“So you believe it was Severus that gave Mr. Weasley this potion?”

“At first yes. But just now I noticed something. Albus, Professor Snape is also under the effects of Blood of Jericho.”

Chapter Twenty: Outside Influence and Halloween

Students and teachers alike were looking on in shock at the scene that was unfolding before them. Many, if not most, of those occupying the Great Hall were nervous to say the least when ‘The boy who lived’ made his way into the hall looking much like a rabid pit bull that had spotted a very enticing looking prey. But that fear quickly turned to shock as he man handled Professor Snape before stunning him and then speaking with the Headmaster.

“Albus, Professor Snape is also under the effects of Blood of Jericho!” Harry whispered in a harsh voice that barely masked his concern regarding this situation. Professor Dumbledore for his part remained as he always did and seemed unaffected by this startling news. A facade Harry knew would be shed once they were away from the general public of the castle.

“Grab Severus, we’ll take him to Gryffindor’s chamber as well and see if we can shed some light on this.” Harry, not even bothering with a levitation charm, simply threw Snape over his shoulder and quickly made his way out of the hall with Professor Dumbledore at his side. The moment the doors slammed shut the volume in the hall had risen ten fold. Students expressing their shock or delight about what Harry had done to Snape. The teachers, who would usually feel the need to get things under control, simply sat and stared at the closed door. They could not bring themselves to believe that any student, especially Harry Potter, would have the audacity to assault a Hogwarts professor in front of the entire student body.

“Alright Harry, how is this possible?” Professor Dumbledore began as the wall closed up behind him and Harry deposited the unconscious form of Severus Snape on the couch.

“I don’t have a clue. It should be impossible. If it were just Percy we would at least have an idea what we were working with. The fact that, apart from myself and Snape, no one should know that this potion ever existed left us with at least a strong probability of where this potion came from. But since he has been given a dose of it as well this leaves us at square one. We should probably have one of our people check out Snape’s quarters as soon as possible!” Harry suggested.

“That would be wise. I will have Mr. Longbottom see to that!”

“Actually it would probably be better to send Ginny. She has a much stronger stomach and this is Snape’s quarters were talking about.” Harry suggested after a moment with a grin on his face. Albus chuckled as if reliving an old memory. Neither Neville or Luna were big fans of the smells of old potions ingredients and dead things floating around in jars and as Harry said, ‘this is Snape’s quarters were talking about’.

“Just in case, we better tell her not to touch anything. There could be other nasty surprises in there. With any luck he will know more than Percy did.”

“So were you able to get anything out of Mr. Weasley that was useful?”
Dumbledore asked after a moment.

“Nothing really! The only thing of any use was that there was only enough Blood of Jericho for one other person, which I think we could safely say was Snape. After the effects were completely lifted he could not remember anything before Luna stunning him. It took me close to two and a half hours to get to the point where he could answer my questions for himself. It probably won’t take as long for Snape. No disrespect meant to Percy but Professor Snape has a much stronger mind! Well we might as well get started!” Harry sighed as he took a seat next to the couch and removed a vial of purple liquid. Albus eyed the vial suspiciously for a moment before asking.

“Do you have an endless supply of that stuff or something?” Harry looked confused for a moment before he chuckled.

“You could say that. The components are simple enough but the brewing takes a lifetime it seems. So I always have a few cauldrons cooking this stuff so I never run out. When one batch is done I bottle it up and start another. I always have eight batches going at once. I don’t really feel like running out at a time that I really need it. It takes just over twelve years to brew and mature before it is ready to use. I tell you, the man that came up with this was a genius, a very patient genius. I can still teach you to brew it if you like.” Harry offered with his eyes twinkling.

“No thank you Harry. I prefer to keep my sense of hearing while questioning someone.” This of course was not the true reason. Professor Dumbledore was a man that did not like causing anyone pain if he did not have to. Although Harry’s interrogation methods were more efficient Albus preferred to stick with more humane methods while dealing with captured enemies. Both have tried on numerous occasions to sway the other to their way of thinking but it just wasn’t going to happen. It was widely believed that the only reason either refused to at least toy with the others ideas was due to the fact that they loved their debates very much and the argument between interrogation and what some consider torture was a good way to get an excellent debate going. And many of their debates last a long time.

“Suit yourself!” Harry replied with an over done dramatic sigh. Turning back to Snape he dropped three drops onto his tongue. With a wave of his hand Snape awoke and was bound within an instant.

“Potter what do you thi....”

“Quiet! Now if you start running your mouth I will make damn sure your master finds out that you’ve failed him as soon as possible.” Harry said with a wicked grin on his face. Snape paled considerably, considering this was Snape that was no small feat. “I would imagine he will be very displeased.”

“But, but he will kill me if I divulge anything!” Snape stuttered much the same

way the fake Peter Pettigrew always did while in the presence of Voldemort.

“There are things far worse than death. And I have no problem doing them all if I have to too get the information I need!” Harry said scathingly but was having a hard time hiding his surprise at Snape’s response. Moving off to the other side of the room Harry needed to speak with his grandfather.

“Harry I was under the impression that this potion would turn them into fanatics, not just unwilling but unable to cooperate with us.” Professor Dumbledore’s surprise was only eclipsed by Harry’s satisfaction.

“It does but it seems that Snape’s subconscious is actually able to influence his actions to a certain extent. Besides I have my own little talents. I’ll explain later. But anyway his mind must be much more powerful than I originally thought. Granted he was able to hide his true feelings and intentions from Voldemort for many years. We may actually be able to get some answers this time and Snape may be able to remember at least a little bit of information after his body is purged of the Blood’s influence. But for now we will question him under ‘Purple Skies’.”

“Purple Skies?” Dumbledore asked with confusion etched into his features.

“Yeah, last night I decided that I should probably give this potion a name, I use it often enough. I have always liked watching the sun set, especially just before it gets dark and the sky has a dark purple color to it. So I figured Purple Skies was a pretty good name.”

“Nice!”

“Yeah. Well let’s get started.” Harry finished as he made his way back over to Snape. “Now, you of course being Professor Snape you will know what this is!” He began as he waved the vial of Purple Skies before the potions master. Snape’s eyes grew wide and filled with nervousness.

“You didn’t!” He choked out.

“I did! Three drops! You have studied this potion and it’s components down to every last detail so I’m sure you can imagine what it is going to feel like if I don’t get what I want.” Snape, his face white as crisp new parchment, could only nod dumbly. “Good, I’m glad we understand each other because one way or another I will get what I need from you. Your cooperation is preferable but not necessary. Now I am going to explain the situation to you then we will begin. Normally I would like to keep things as painless as possible but that is completely up to you.” For the next twenty minutes Harry explained everything from the attack the night before to the history and makeup of the Blood of Jericho to the process by which to flush it from the body.

“So would you like to be returned to normal?” Harry asked with a cheery smile. After a moment in which Snape seemed to be going through some internal battle he nodded mutely. This surprised Harry a bit but did not show it. “Good, glad to have your cooperation.”

“Now last night Percy told me how Lord Maul learned how to brew my potion, if you answer is any different you will learn a new meaning to the word pain. So how did he learn of The Blood of Jericho?”

“I do not know. I was not aware of being under any potion until now. I have read of the potion in the book you copied for me but was unaware that anyone else knew of its existence.” Harry growled in frustration after hearing this answer.

“Has anyone else seen that book?” Albus asked with wary eyes.

“No, I keep it locked up, it never leaves my potions chamber and I keep that with me at all times.” Snape answered after a few moments of ‘struggle’.

“Do you know Lord Maul’s true name? What does he look like?”

“I do not know. I have never seen him that I am aware of. I received a letter a few weeks ago from Lucius Malfoy asking me to join with Lord Maul. I was going to inform Professor Dumbledore of the development after dinner that evening but after thinking it over during my meal I decided to join with him. I would receive a letter from Lucius every few days with instructions. That is the only contact I have had with him.” Snape was quickly becoming visibly tired and Harry knew that he would not be able to influence his answers for very much longer and would soon revert back to a blind fanatic. Harry was about to ask what those instructions were when Ginny contacted him telepathically and informed him that she had found the letters Lucius had sent.

‘Alright don’t touch them with you bare hands!’ Harry ordered immediately.

‘Why, there just letters Harry?’

‘That’s not the point! Snape had a change of heart and decided to side with Lord Maul very quickly. At this point I don’t want to take any chances.’

‘Alright, I’ll be up there soon!’ Ginny sighed.

“Alright let’s just get this shit out of him!” With the potion taking back control of Snape it wasn’t very hard to get him to answer questions wrong and thus receiving the pain that came with it. After only forty five minutes the potion was completely dissolved and everyone’s favorite potions master was back to his usual cheerful self.

“For the love of Merlin, Potter! Do you have any idea what that feels like?” Snape bit out. He was clearly having doubts about using Purple Skies on anyone again.

“I have an idea!” Harry replied, not the least bit offended by his professor’s tone.

“An idea? Is that all? An idea?” He snapped back trying to look his most menacing.

“What, do you think I’m stupid enough to put myself through that when I have so many Death Eaters to test it on?” Harry asked with a smile. This answer only

served to irritate the already excitable professor even more.

“Why in the hell would anyone put another human being through something that painful?”

“It’s all a question about the lesser of two evils actually. They have the choice to answer my questions or not to. Any pain they suffer is only a result of the choices they make. Plus this little beauty probably saved thousands of lives when Voldemort decided to attack cities across Europe. Altogether I think a Death Eater suffering a little pain is a very small price to pay for the locations of other attacks, don’t you?” Harry finished with a lopsided grin. Snape stuck out his lower lip in thought before he nodded with a little grin of his own. He decided very quickly that the benefits were more than enough to set his conscious at ease. After all, he did not want to give up using a potion that was new to him because of something as mundane as a conscious where Death Eaters are concerned.

“Yes, I believe it is.” He responded a moment later.

“Oh, and yes, I was stupid enough to try that on myself first. I figured if it could make me tell the truth, it would work on anyone. After the debacle with the Blood of Jericho I began testing most of the new potions I find or I come up with on myself first!” Harry add as a shiver went up his back. The two ‘older’ men stared at him, blinking their eyes rapidly.

“Did it work?” Snape asked curiously.

“Damn near! It took me a few minutes to adjust and get used to the pain so I could sort of shut it off. I had about three minutes of the pain constantly assaulting me before I was able to shake it off. But after that I felt kind of good.”

“What the hell was all the screaming about?” Came a hoarse voice from behind them. Spinning around swiftly their eyes met a very rough looking Percy Weasley. He was using the door frame to hold himself up due to his lack of energy. His skin had a deathly pale color to it and large dark bags under his eyes. The fringe of his hair was plastered to his forehead with sweat and his eyes had a hard time focusing on the three figures before him.

“Ah, sorry Percy we were just fixing Professor Snape up.” Harry apologized. This statement got Percy’s undivided attention.

“Professor Snape was the other one given the potion?” At Harry’s nod Percy thought for a moment. “Did I scream that loud last night?”

“Yeah it but took longer to get out of your system so you were screaming a lot more.” Harry chuckled.

“No wonder my throat feels like a hedgehog made it his home.” He replied as he turned around and made his way back to the bed. Professors Dumbledore and Snape were looking at the retreating form of Percy Weasley in shock.

“My god, how long were you questioning him before he was back to himself?”

“Two and a half hours of solid lies! Then after that he told me to keep going just in case.” The two professors looked at him in shock at this statement.

“He actually told you to keep inflicting that much pain on him? Why in gods name would anyone do that to themselves?” Snape asked, thinking that Percy was completely out of his mind.

“For one thing professor, you were not aware that you had been given any form of potion and the fact that your subconscious was able to influence some of the things you did only reinforced the belief that you were given nothing. You, and to a certain extent your subconscious, believed that you were still in complete control of your mind and body. Percy however KNEW he was given something. People like Percy do not like to feel out of control of their actions at any time. If there was even the slightest chance that there was even a hint of the Blood of Jericho left in his body he would readily agreed to go through ten times that which he went through. He may not remember what he has done these few weeks but inside he knew he was not in control.”

“Makes sense I guess. But shouldn’t he be in the hospital wing?” Snape conceded after thinking of it for a moment.

“Why? He’s not hurt or anything. He just needs a lot of rest. And no disrespect meant to Madam Pomfrey but if he went in there looking like that then she would have him in there for at least two weeks when all he needs is a few days sleep. She does have the tendency to mother her patients a bit.” After a few moments of silence a warm smile drifted onto Harry’s face. “I really should get her something nice for Christmas!” Even Snape let out a short chuckle at this statement. Harry had woken up in the hospital wing more times in his first five years than most people were likely to if they remained at Hogwarts the rest of their natural lives.

“Oh Ginny found those letters Malfoy sent, we should probably have a look at them, she’s on her way up!” Dumbledore nodded and Snape looked confused for a moment before he realized what they were talking about.

“What, you went through my quarters?” He practically shrieked at Harry. Harry for his part remain perfectly calm.

“I didn’t go through it, she did.” He defended himself. Snape then turned his furious eyes to Professor Dumbledore

“Why did you let her in?” He asked in the same tone he used with Harry.

“I didn’t let her in, she let herself in.” The Headmaster replied while trying to stifle a chuckle. They were saved from anymore of Snape’s questions as Ginny entered the room and his fiery eyes turned to her. Ginny, obviously unaware or simply unconcerned with the potions master’s anger, approached Harry and Albus with a little sway in her walk that Harry found intriguing. There was also something that made Harry a little worried. Not many knew it but Ginny’s sense of humor, and acts

of retribution could easily rival her twin brothers. The look in her eyes at the moment meant bad news for someone, considering what she had just been doing and where she had been Harry had a pretty good idea who that person was. Noticing that the letters were wrapped up in a bit canvas, he turned his eyes back to Ginny.

“Ok so why didn’t you want me to touch them?” She asked in an airy tone. Harry took the letters from her and sat down at one of the many tables in the room where the others joined him.

“Just a theory!” He said simply as he unwrapped the canvas and spread the letters out with a plain letter opener that resided on the table. With a wave of his hand he summoned a small crystal container that was half full of a greenish powder that gave off a foul odor that neither Harry nor Snape seemed to notice.

“Ah, I see!” Snape commented as Harry took a pinch of this powder and sprinkled it on the first line of one of the letters. A moment later the letter began giving off a faint orange smoke that just seemed to hang in the air like some form of cancer.

“That is why I did not want you to touch it!” Harry told Ginny simply. “Albus, I think it would be a good idea to call a meeting with the order and some of the heads at the ministry. Normally It would probably be a good idea to keep this a secret from some of them but with the destruction of the north tower and the fact that the son of the Minister of Magic was the one who carried it out I believe we will have to tell them something at least and it might as well be the truth. Most of it anyway.” Harry was about to continue when he caught sight of part of one of the letters. Looking down closely Harry could make out the opening line which shocked him a bit.

‘Dearest Severus’

Dearest Severus? There was actually someone out there that liked Snape, and on a personal level. Just skipping the contents of the letter Harry immediately scanned to the bottom to see who the poor misguided soul was. What he saw he was not ready for.

“LOVE MINERVA” Harry shouted out loud, to shocked to even think about keeping his voice down much less keeping it in his head. Harry threw a startled glance at Snape who seemed to go bright red with embarrassment and pale white with shock and fear at the same time. Suddenly, without warning, Snape burst into action. He swiftly reached across the table and grabbed the letter out from under Harry’s nose and promptly threw it into the fireplace.

“Not one word, from any of you. If I so much as hear of this you will all regret the day you were born. That goes for you to Headmaster; my personal life is the business of no one in this room except myself.” After saying this Snape turned on his heel and charged out of the door. Harry looked at his other companions in shock for a moment before he realized both Albus and Ginny were laughing hysterically. It took Harry a moment but he managed to compose himself enough to where he found the extreme humor in the situation.

“I have been wondering for many years, what Severus’s reaction would be to a

situation like this. It seems I no longer have to wait. Now we just need to see Minerva's reaction when she finds out their relationship is no longer a secret." Albus said after catching his breath.

"Grandfather, you have a remarkable talent for stating the obvious. Unlike most people you actually make it seem wise and not idiotic." Harry laughed.

"Of course he does! He's Dumbledore, even if he says something idiotic everyone that hears it will think it has some deep underlining significance and automatically classify it as great wisdom that other mere mortals can not even begin to comprehend!" Ginny stated matter of factly.

"I must agree, most of the wizarding world sees me as infallible in certain aspects. Certainly raises the pressure of possible failure when trying something risky, does it not?" With that said the three exited the room to call a meeting at the earliest possible time.

'Oh Harry,' Albus called telepathically before Harry turned down another corridor. 'Earlier you said you had your own little talents, what did you mean?'

'What? Oh, that! Well you see Lord Maul can terrify a person, simply with his presence if he wishes, that that person will do precisely what he wants them to do. They are too frightened not to. That is where he has gathered many of his followers. Anyway, I have the same ability. Though I must say I'm a little shocked that it still worked, to any extent, with Percy and Professor Snape while they were under the control of that potion!' Harry replied as he went off to gather everyone for the meeting.

Three hours later a rather large group was sitting around the table in the Hall of the Phoenix waiting for the meeting to begin. Every member of the Order and DA were present as usual. The table had been expanded to make room for those that had not previously participated in such meetings. Most were members of the ministry and were eyeing the students at the table.

"Professor Dumbledore, do you really think it wise to include children in a meeting like this?" Asked a pompous looking official, one that had not been there before. Harry immediately shot a glare at the man.

"What is your name sir?"

"I'm Adalphus Attwater, Deputy Minister of Research. And I believe I made it quite clear that my question was directed at the Headmaster, not to you." When minister Attwater had finished, many officials had smirks on their faces, but only those that have never before been there. Most others however had looks of glee on their faces because of what they knew was coming.

"Mr. Attwater," Harry began, his eyes flashing dangerously. "Let me make a few things perfectly clear to you. If at any time they slip your mind you can ask your boss, Minister Wallace, since he has been here since our first meeting. First, while in this hall I am in control of these meetings. Second, we are not 'including' these students in

this meeting; it is these students and the rest of us that are including you and your other colleagues. The only reason YOU and some others are here is because there is some information you need to know. Third, these 'children' helped decimate an army of well over three thousand Death Eaters. If you feel you are above them in any way take out your wand pick one of them and prove it, otherwise keep your mouth shut." Most within the hall, including various ministers and professors, burst into a short applause before Dumbledore quieted them down to begin the meeting.

"It's fairly obvious that you all already know about the attack on the school last night. The exact details of the explosive used is still unknown but that is being worked on. We are fortunate that no one was killed although two students had minor injuries and Professor Trelawney is recovering well even though she has not yet regained consciousness. Now for the details of the attack I will turn this meeting back over to Mr. Potter." Everyone's eyes turned toward Harry as he stood up and began pacing back and forth. After a few minutes he began.

"Alright, please no questions until I finish. Last night a man snuck onto Hogwarts grounds and planted a large amount of the plastic explosive C-4 at the base of the north tower. The C-4 was modified a bit on the subatomic level. How this was done we don't know. This alteration gave the bomb the much needed added energy it would need to break through the many wards and shields that protect the walls of this school. Ginny Weasley caught the perpetrator minutes later as he ran into the Forbidden Forest."

"We discovered soon after that he was under the influence of the most powerful mind control potion ever created. It took me three hours before I was able to break through and destroy the potions grip on his mind. This morning I found another in this school that was under its control. Thankfully it did not take me as long to rid him of the effects. That's a basic rundown so before we move on are there any questions?" What followed was chaos. Everyone attempting to yell their questions over the voices of the others.

"SILENCE!" It seemed to everyone that they were immediately thrown into a world without sound. No one spoke. No one even breathed. They were all staring, wide eyed, at the owner of that voice. "Thank you. Potter, continue if you please!" Blasie Zambini added as she rolled her eyes at all those staring at her as if she had lost her mind.

"Well as long as I have your permission Blasie!" Harry chuckled as Blasie stuck her tongue out at him. "Now you will ask one question at a time or I will not answer any at all, is that clear? Good."

"Ok, Mr. Potter, who was the man that was captured after the explosion and the man that was discovered to have been given the potion as well?" Asked a young witch, probably mid twenties, that Harry did not recognize. Harry hesitated for a few moments before answering.

"The man we captured last night was Percival Weasley. The other man was Professor Severus Snape." Gasps rang out from all around the table. The fact that Percy had planted the bomb was only known to the Weasleys, Hermione and just a

couple others. And aside from Ginny, Albus and Harry no one knew of Professor Snape.

“You said he was under a mind controlling potion, both of them, which potion was used?” Minister Attwater asked with a sneer. It was clear as day to Harry that this man was not a supporter, willing or otherwise, of Lord Maul but damn he was a pain in the ass.

“The potion that was used is called The Blood of Jericho!” Many confused looks were exchanged while a few, most notably Mr. Attwater, scoffed.

“Mr. Potter, I am the Deputy Minister of Research. I oversee the development of new charms, curses, potions and anything else imaginable. There is no such potion.” Attwater claimed confidently.

“Really?” Was Harry’s only reply as he pulled the small box, which was his potions chamber, out of his robes and enlarged it until the two massive doors stood before him. Without saying a word Harry walked swiftly inside and stopped before a large cabinet.

Harry returned just moments later with a small vial clutched in his fist but his face looked somewhat puzzled. Harry held it up for all to see and thought who knew of it now knew where it got its name. The liquid inside had all the same attributes that one would come to expect from blood. It even had the exact same redish black color.

“This is The Blood of Jericho! The only sample known to exist. There are only two people that know how to brew this potion. I am one of them.” Harry conveniently left Snape out of the select group. He did not need to worry about someone grabbing Snape in order to get the formula. “As I said, it is the most powerful potion of its kind to ever exist. It will turn the drinker into a blindly obedient fanatic.” Unfortunately Mr. Attwater seemed to be a man who dearly loved the sound of his own voice.

“If this potion is so powerful than why hasn’t anyone ever heard of it, why isn’t it recorded with all others like it at the ministry as a dark arts potion? And finally how is it that you know about it when no one else does?” It seemed Harry was not the only one getting annoyed with this man. Nearly everyone at the table was staring holes into the man.

“Alright I’ll answer your questions in the order that they were asked. First, no one knows of this potion because when the brewer first realized what it was he had made he destroyed nearly everything concerning its existence, including modifying the memories of a few people he was working with at the time. As for having it recorded at the ministry, well that would just be stupid. Nearly anyone working at the Ministry Building can look through files concerning banned or illegal items, spells or potions, so what would be the point of informing the Ministry if it HAD to be kept secret? And lastly, I know of the potion and how to brew it because I created it! Does that answer your questions Mr. Attwater?” Harry finished with a serious edge in his voice. “Now let’s get back to the questions.”

“How were they given this Potion Harry?” Hermione asked.

“It was given to Percy when he was captured two weeks after the presentation of the Order of Merlin. Professor Snape was a bit more complicated, and ingenious I might add.” With a wave of his hand Harry produced a small stake of letters. “Not that long ago Professor Snape received a letter from Lucius Malfoy, asking him to join their side. Normally Snape would bring a development like this to our attention immediately but the potion was already working its way into his body. Over the next few weeks he received more letters from Malfoy. These letters served only a single purpose. They were giving Snape very simple and run of the mill type instructions. Basically all he was supposed to do was try to slowly build support for Lord Maul among some of the students and other minor things as well. Their main purpose however was that they were how the potion was given to him. You see these letters were not written in ink but with the Blood of Jericho. While handling these letters his hands would come into contact with the potion and it would work its way in through his skin. Due to the small doses one would receive in this fashion it had to be done multiple times. Alright one more question before we move on.”

“Harry how is it that the hold this potion has over you is broken?” Harry looked up and smiled when he realized that it was Tonks that asked the question.

“The only way possible to break its hold is through extreme pain, and a lot of it.”

“What, like the Cruciatus curse?” Wormtail asked as a shiver went up his back.

“No, a lot worse and for a very long time. Let’s see, how did I explain it earlier? Oh yes, the way this potion works is it takes over your brain and nervous system. With enough pain and the right amount of time you can force the brain to focus, instinctually, on that particular sensation instead of what they are being forced to do. Normally I would probably have had to use the Cruciatus curse to get it done but instead Luna gave me the idea to use something else that did the same thing only much more extreme so it did not take so long, and it did not have the nasty little side effects like death or going insane which is always a plus.”

“Mr. Potter, would it be possible to get a small sample of this potion for study? Maybe we can find another way of fighting against its effects.” Madam Bones asked.

“Not a chance in hell! This potion will NEVER fall into anyone’s hands. On either side. Something this powerful could and would cause an awful lot of damage. As I said, there are only two people alive that can brew it and neither of us will EVER allow someone else to be put into the position where they could possibly reproduce it.” A few at the table looked inquiringly at Harry over the comment about neither allowing someone else to learn its secrets but he did not elaborate. “Besides some of the components make it impossible to break it down to its separate ingredients, so studying it will do you no good unless you have the instructions on how to brew it which you will never have. And there is no other way to break its hold!” Harry replied stiffly. This answer only served to inflame Mr. Attwater’s sense of Ministry pride.

“Potter what makes you so sure that just because you are unable to find something new that the PROFESSIONALS at the ministry can not? After all, your own experience in such matters is somewhat limited!” Harry was about to stand and

do everyone a favor by blasting the man into oblivion but before he could Snape of all people spoke up.

“Attwater, you and nearly everyone at the Ministry regard me as one of the foremost potions masters in the world. Potter’s knowledge and experience greatly surpasses my own, so if he says that you will not be able to do anything with it, you will save yourself a lot of time and aggravation by accepting it.” Attwater looked about to protest when he was cut short as a phoenix soared into the hall and landed on his shoulder. The magnificent bird inclined his head briefly to Harry then turned to Ginny and let out a high thrilling note before lifting Mr. Attwater and carried him out of the hall.

“Thank you Ginny.” Harry said inclining his head to her.

“You’re welcome Harry. Now maybe we can get somewhere without that pompous ass here.” There was a nod of agreement all round and they all got down to business. For the next three hours they discussed the attack, Percy’s condition which sent Molly into tears, and possible strategies for combating this new threat.

While walking towards the exit of the Hall of the Phoenix after the meeting Harry was holding a hushed conversation with Professors Dumbledore and Snape.

“Potter when you referred to the two that knew how to brew the Blood of Jericho you said that neither would give up the information. But you did not inform them that I also know, so how did you come to the conclusion that whoever brewed this batch will not inform someone else?” Snape began. It was a simple enough question to answer but the implications of that answer were far from simple.

“I know because the doses that were given to you and to Percy came from that same original batch that I brewed.” Harry stated with his face set in stone. His two companions looked at him in shock before Albus found his voice.

“How is that possible? You lead us to believe that you destroyed the entire batch after you realized what it was. Then you came up with that sample during the meeting!” The Headmaster said sternly. To this Harry could only shrug.

“Call it professional pride. It does the ego very good to know you created something like that, so I kept some. The recipe will do no one any good because the two key ingredients are now extinct. But I have two samples in that cabinet that you saw when I retrieved one of the samples. The only problem is that the other one is gone!”

“WHAT?” Both professors yelled in unison. Those walking ahead of them stopped for a moment and looked back. Snape raising his voice was quite commonplace but you rarely heard Dumbledore do so. After waiting a few moments for everyone ahead to move on Dumbledore continued. “Could someone have gotten in there without you knowing? Right stupid question.” He added after one look at Harry’s stiff face.

“How this happened, I don’t know! Besides the two of you the only people that

have been in there are Forge, Ginny, Luna, Neville, Dora and lets see, um, Firenze and Bane. That's it, call me selfish if you want but there's a lot of stuff in there that I don't want anyone messing with. Strictly speaking this is a very disturbing turn of events."

"Potter you said yourself that Blood of Jericho can not be reproduced by simply studying the original formula. Lord Maul doesn't know how to brew; there was only two doses in that vial and both of those given it have been cured so over all what is the damage?" Snape asked with a bit of an edge to his voice that Harry jumped on. Spinning around to face his Professor he answered his question.

"The damages are these Snape. One, we have two students and a professor in the hospital wing. Two, we still have no idea who this man is or how he is organizing his forces. Where ever he is based he can shield against just about any type of surveillance, including Forge's well. And lastly, I am the only person alive that can open my potions chamber. No other man, no matter what magic is used or how powerful the man is, should be able to open it. Just as I am no longer capable of opening yours! The force needed to force your way in would be astronomical, I'm talking god like power here. So either Lord Maul is god himself or one of those allowed in has betrayed me and my chambers secrets. I don't like these two conclusions but one must be the truth! Now Snape, do you see what the damages are?" Harry glared at the potions master before he levitated himself out of the hall.

Down below just as a phoenix got a firm hold on his shoulder, Snape laughed quietly to himself. Although he both hated and feared the conclusions Potter had come up with he still loved pushing his buttons. He no longer felt the same animosity and hatred towards Harry but it was good to know that no matter how powerful he had gotten he could still irritate him. After all, Potter still made him want to pull his hair out by the roots often himself, so why should it not work both ways.

The next couple weeks went by fast and Halloween was soon upon them. Percy was back to one hundred percent and back at work even though the Daily Prophet was screaming for him to be sent to Azkaban, saying that Harry made this potion up out of his imagination to keep a friend out of jail. These screams were quickly silenced when Harry publicly challenged the reporter, editor, and the Daily Prophets manager to take a dose of the Blood of Jericho. They all declined.

Neville's parents were recovering swiftly and would soon be moved from St. Mungo's to a private room within the Hogwarts hospital wing where Neville could be with them whenever needed. This was also done because the potion that had been given to them had not been used for over a millennium. And both Harry and Snape wanted them near by incase something went wrong.

Remus was preparing for his second full moon, since taking Harry's potion, which would happen the night after Halloween. His first transformation after taking it had been the strangest night of his life. He had spent the night within a room that Harry had setup next to his own chambers. The room was just like any normal sitting room except the furniture was charmed to prevent Remus from biting and chewing on it. Harry explained that this was to break the habits of the werewolf and thus hopefully bring Remus into control at a quicker rate. Throughout that first night

Remus was in a constant cycle of having control and then losing it soon after. However he was able to gain control, and hold it for over an hour and a half until the sun came up. It had been decided that since a werewolf's bite will not 'change' other animals, only humans, that Sirius and Peter would join Remus in their animagus forms while he goes through his next transformation, which they hoped would be his last full transformation. Both Sirius and Peter had argued and fought with Harry for days to be allowed to be with him during the first full moon but since Harry had no idea how Remus would react he could not allow it. A decision Remus wholeheartedly agreed with.

The evening of Halloween seemed to be very stressful for Harry. Due to the pressure put on them by their friends Harry and Ginny decided to go to the ball together but maintained adamantly that they were going strictly as friends. Thinking back he could not remember a time that he was as nervous. Not as much at the Yule Ball in his fourth year or anytime he was with Cho. He had been wracking his brain all day yet he could not grasp the reason behind it. The dance did not start for about an hour and a half but Harry was already up in his dorm getting ready. Ron soon followed and when he walked in the sight he saw caused him to laugh hysterically.

Harry was sitting on his bed with several sets of dress robes hovering in front of him. He seemed to be favoring a nice dark green robe with intricate runes lining the hem in gold. A comb was magically moving around his head combing his hair that now reached about midway down to his elbow.

"Well Harry, for someone going as 'friends', you certainly are putting a lot of thought into your appearance." Ron tried to stifle his laughter when Harry shot him a death glare.

"Ron I have said this several times so please listen carefully, Ginny and I are just friends." Harry said stiffly but there was obviously some doubt in his voice that even a two year old could notice.

"Ok, I listened, now you listen to me! You like Ginny! Ginny likes you! So while you are at the ball have fun and try not to do anything stupid." Harry was about to comment when Ron added, "Oh by the way, the green one looks best." Then he left the dorm laughing to himself. Harry was a little shocked to notice that Ron left already in his dress robes and ready to go.

An hour later Harry was standing in the common waiting for Ginny to arrive. He was pacing nervously as other couples passed through the portrait hole to head down to the party. Harry was very near panicked when Ginny arrived with Hermione. Harry watched with a lump forming in his throat as Ginny descended the stairs wearing robes of pure white that seemed to shimmer in the glow from the many candles floating about the room. Her dark red hair pulled up tightly with many curls tumbling down her back. Her dark eyes sparkling with mischief and a bit of nervousness as Harry 'attempted' to speak.

"Um, hi. Should we..... that is to say..." Harry continued to flounder around as Ginny looked on in amusement.

“Shall we Head down to the Great Hall?” Ginny asked with a laugh, deciding that she should get them moving before he really started to embarrass himself. Not trusting himself with words Harry simply nodded. Leading her through the corridors to the Entrance Hall where they arrived at the same time as Cho and her date Roger Davies. Cho was shooting Ginny death glares and Roger was looking at Harry with jealousy in his eyes. He clearly did not like the fact that Cho would much rather be with Harry than him. Harry however did not notice since he was busy trying to keep himself from panicking.

Standing at the top of the stairs was a small group of friends that were having a very hard time controlling their laughter.

“I can’t believe this. I have seen Harry with many girls before and he has never acted like that. He wasn’t even that bad with Cho in third year.” Neville said after he caught his breath. When he looked up he saw Ron and Hermione staring at him in shock.

“Harry, with girls. I would have figured that he spent all his time learning more ways to fight against dark magic. I mean, that is why he was there after all.” Hermione said. This served to only throw the others into another row of laughter and giggles.

“Hermione, Harry’s a guy! He’s well lets see, oh well I forget how old he is now. He is known throughout the world for many things and being the worlds oldest virgin is certainly not one of them.” After saying this Neville began laughing again as Hermione’s face turn red and Ron paled considerably as he thought about his sister.

“Don’t even ask Ron, that is her business not mine or yours. Now let’s go to the party.” Luna said as she grabbed Colin by the hand and made her way to the Great Hall. Many people were shocked to find that Luna was going with Colin, after all why would someone as powerful as her be interested in a guy like Colin. The answer was simple really; Colin had been one of her closest friends until she had left to train. And unlike most of her friends he never talked about her as ‘Loony’ Luna Lovegood behind her back. Besides it’s not like there was anything intimate going on. Unlike Harry and Ginny, Luna and Colin really were going as friends.

Upon entering the hall Luna spotted Harry and Ginny sitting at a table with Blasie Zambini and her date, a boy that she only knew by sight as one of the seventh year Slytherins that had helped fight during the attack.

Turning away from her conversation with Blasie she Looked up at the head table and realized that Professor Dumbledore was not there.

‘Albus, where are you?’ Ginny was a bit confused. He would never miss a party like this unless something really important came up.

‘Ah, Virginia, I am up in my office speaking with Fred and George actually. Is anything wrong?’ Ginny breathed a sigh of relief. The tone of the headmaster’s voice spoke clearly that nothing was wrong.

‘No Albus everything is fine, I just got a very strange feeling when you weren’t here that’s all. Well tell my brothers I love them. Sorry to bother you.’

‘No problem my dear.’

“Hello Blasie.” Luna greeted as she and Colin took a seat.

“Lovegood.” She greeted back while inclining her head a bit. “This is Christopher Manard. Chris this is Luna Lovegood.” Greeting continued to be thrown back and forth across the table as Ron and Hermione joined them along with Neville and Susan Bones.

A year, or even six months ago many would find it shocking to see Harry sitting down and talking civilly with a couple of Slytherins. But since the attack many had decided to put aside the old house rivalries and start working together, a fact that most of the teaching staff found very encouraging. Despite what many had believed, not all Slytherins were evil. They were startled to find that many of them were just like themselves, they just had different ways of thinking things through. Ways that could be used for good or bad depending on the mental nature of the individual in question. So now it was not uncommon to see members of Slytherin house interacting with those they would have previously shunned. But of course there was some who refused to allow times to change completely.

There was a very small number of Gryffindors, Ravenclaws, and Hufflepuffs that were still a little apprehensive while around the Slytherins. The most outspoken of the students was Draco Malfoy. He continuously berated his fellow housemates about their associates in other houses and sometimes even threatened their families. The knowledge that Lucius Malfoy was no longer at Azkaban made people a bit jumpy around Draco and take his threats seriously.

Scanning the Great Hall, Harry saw many friends, classmates and mentors laughing and dancing and just carrying on and having fun. He was just about to turn his attention back to his friends when he caught sight of Professor Snape and McGonagall talking in a nearby corner. No doubt speaking quietly to prevent anyone from over hearing and finding out about their relationship. Their body language gave nothing away but even at such a distance Harry could still see the longing and affection in their eyes and he wondered for a moment how he could have missed it before. Smiling sadly he turned back around to face the table just in time to catch a piece of French bread that was flying towards his face.

“Good to see that you’re still with us. What were you thinking about so hard that you did not notice the first piece hit you in the back of the head?” Harry stared at Blasie for a moment before he decided that he might as well tell the truth.

“I was just wondering about how many times we will have to be this carefree before everything goes to hell.” Everyone sat in silence, looking back and forth at each other.

“Well Potter, you sure know how to kill an evening.” Christopher commented. Harry looked at him with a stony face for a moment before he began to laugh which

set the others off as well. After settling down a few minutes later Hermione brought up a question that had been bothering her.

“Ginny I was wondering, how did you call that Phoenix during our last meeting?” Hermione asked. Everyone else at the table looked at Ginny expectantly.

“Well like you know, Harry bonded us with an animal companion depending on the core of our wands. Of course Neville’s companion was a very large Hungarian Horntail named Gwen. That was how he was able to lure the dragons away from Voldemort and fight with us. Luna’s is a Unicorn, Albus is bonded with his phoenix Fawks and Harry being a Phoenix Lord is bonded with all phoenixes. The core of my wand was a phoenix feather and with an incredible amount of tampering on Forge’s part it turned out that that feather came from one of Harry’s wings.”

“What? So you’re ‘bonded’ with Harry?” Asked Blasie. This seemed to shock her a little bit. Ginny however just grinned.

“No, technically I am not bonded with Harry. Being the feather of a Phoenix Lord I am now bonded, to a certain extent, with all phoenixes. My connection with them is nowhere near as strong as Harry’s but I can communicate with them or get help from them if I need it.” The others at the table just stared at her in disbelief and in some cases, namely Ron, incomprehension. After a few minutes of thoughtful silence Ginny stood up and pulled Harry to his feet.

“Come on Harry lets go dance.” She said as she pulled him towards the dance floor. The two had danced together many times but this time it seemed there was a good bit of tension between the two. Harry began to get nervous and took forever to decide where he should place his hands. But as the music started the tension seemed to slip away and the two began moving as one around the floor.

“You know, that is still very strange to me. Every time I think of Harry and dancing in the same thought disaster always comes to mind. Like at the Yule Ball in forth year.” Ron said as he watched his best friend and sister move around the dance floor with as much grace as a tiger stalking its prey.

“It’s not that strange Ron. I have even learned to dance since then.” Neville said with amusement filling his voice.

“Well since you said that, let’s go dance.” Neville frowned as he allowed Susan to lead him away from the table.

“Harry, is it just me or does this feel strange to you to?” Ginny asked as they continued to dance. Harry looked down into her eyes and saw uncertainty and shockingly enough, longing.

“Um, yeah it does feel a bit strange.” For the life of him he could think of nothing else to say. He just simply locked his eyes onto hers and refused to look away. Very slowly their bodies had moved in, pushing tighter together and Harry’s head began to descend towards her lips as Ginny’s slowly began to close her eyes.

Across the hall stood Luna with Colin, Ron and Hermione and dancing close by was Neville and Susan. Six sets of eyes and all were locked on Harry and Ginny. They all watched with growing anticipation as Harry lowered his head towards Ginny. They were all about to start jumping with joy when.....

“So Potter, what do you plan to do now that my father is free and now has more powerful allies than before?” Harry snapped his head up at the sound of Draco’s voice. Not far away Luna Lovegood had begun a triad of some of the most graphic and derogative swear words she could think of. And she had a very large vocabulary. Beside her Colin, Hermione and Ron had gone pale with her choice of words and were shocked a bit more when Susan Bones had joined them along with Neville. It would appear that he did not take Malfoy’s interruption any better than Luna did.

“Malfoy you are a sad judge of character if you think your father has that much impact on my plans. The only thing he means to me is a shallow grave. And I plan to put him there.” His voice was so cold that Malfoy shivered a bit and could not keep eye contact with Harry.

“The bottom line is Potter; you will not survive much longer.”

“Malfoy you have been saying the same thing for almost three years and I’m still here. I suggest you try something else because divination is clearly not your subject.” Harry said with amusement.

“Yes your still here, but the night is still young.” With that said, Malfoy turned on his heel and headed back towards his friends who were busy laughing at something or another.

“I wonder what he meant by that?” Harry said mostly to himself than to anyone else. But Ginny answered him anyway.

“I don’t know but he certainly seemed to know something. I just hope.....”

‘Harry, Diagon Alley is being attacked!’ Albus’s voice came quick and harsh.

‘What? What’s happened?’ Harry asked even as he and Ginny stormed out of the hall with Luna and Neville hot on their heels.

‘I’m not sure yet! I was speaking with the Weasley twins through the floo network when they suddenly said they were being attacked. At the moment we don’t know what kind of numbers we are dealing with here.’

‘Alright grandfather we will take care of this. It might be a good idea for you to head down to the Great Hall, our quick departure seemed to have upset a few of the younger students.’

‘That I can do, but first I will contact Minister Weasley and see about getting some Aurors there to back you up.’

‘Ok we will be back as soon as possible and we will send word when we are

finished.' Harry finished as the four friends vanished from the entry hall just after Ron, Hermione, Susan and Colin rounded the corner.

"Ok, what the hell is going on?" Ron bellowed. Hermione could do nothing but shrug as she and the others stared at the spot their friends had previously occupied. She had known for awhile that they could apparate on Hogwarts grounds but it still shocked her to see it. After all, it's supposed to be impossible.

Chapter Twenty One: Death Effects Us All

Harry and the others reappeared inside the building of Weasley Wizard Wheezes. They were now dressed to fight. Wearing fairly loose fitting pants and leather tunics as well as dragon hide gloves as well as boots that each had several daggers poking out of the tops. Under normal circumstances the four would gladly take their time moving through the store but hey, business before pleasure.

"Fred, George, where are you?" Harry called out.

"Up front. You better hurry up!"

Rushing through the store, passing shelves stocked full of wonderful looking prank items, they soon reached the twins who were crouched down beside the open front window looking out to the street. The two looked a little disheveled but were relatively unharmed.

"So what do we have?" Neville asked quickly. After turning around from firing a curse at passing dark wizard Fred answered.

"Well it looks like there are around sixty of them. Like with the attack on Azkaban they are all wearing blood red robes with hoods covering their faces. We have been able to take out quite a few from here but we sure as hell weren't going to go out there to fight alone. We have had to sneak out a few times to get some children away from those monsters; we have them and several others hidden away downstairs where absolutely no one will find them. As far as we could tell there have been at least two dozen fatalities. But since you are here now let's go kick some ass." Both Harry and Ginny were about to object to the twins coming out onto the street with them but they would have none of that saying that they were too old to stay behind and hide behind their little sister.

As one they quietly slipped out the front door and moved swiftly behind a pile of broken crates and barrels sitting out in front of Eeylops Owl Emporium which was just next door. Glancing down the street in either direction Harry found that there were many more than two dozen dead. His blood began to boil as he saw one had been a three year old girl.

"George you stick with Ginny and Neville. Fred you with me and Luna. If you have to, do not hesitate to kill or they will kill you. Alright Neville head on towards Gringotts, we will move to the Leaky Cauldron. Take out everyone you see but make sure some survive. Alright lets go." There they split up, heading in different directions.

Harry led Luna and Fred through small alleyways and over stone walls that sat behind the stores on the street. They came across many of Lord Maul's underlings and all went down quickly.

"Harry, you were just exaggerating a bit when you told us that we should be prepared to kill if need be right?" Fred asked Harry a little nervously after they had stopped in the alley behind Quality Quidditch Supplies.

"Yeah, just a little bit." Harry answered and Fred visible relaxed. "So little it was non existent. Fred I know you have had a happy go lucky life. You live for jokes and making everyone laugh. If someone did you wrong you would rather play some prank on them rather than resort to physical violence. But you have to understand something, these guys do not want to humiliate or embarrass you, they do not want to hurt you even. They want you DEAD. So you will do everything you can possibly do to make sure you stay alive because I sure as hell am not going to go back to that school and tell your mother she lost a son. Now do you understand?" Fred could only nod in reply as Harry's words sank in. Everything he said was true. Granted he did have quite a bit of experience fighting, but he was never put into a situation where he had to take a life.

"Yeah, just the thought of killing makes me sick! Do you get used to it?" Fred whispered as they got ready to move again.

"Good, at least I know that if you were to kill someone you would have had no other choice. And no, you don't get used to it. Some kill because they like it, others will do it for any number of reasons because they get used to it, it becomes a routine. But for normal people, no matter how many times they do it, they will never get used to it. Weather it was in self defense, by accident or defending someone else, we will always feel the pain, always hear the screams. The more you kill the greater the pain and the louder the screams, and they will NEVER go away." After Harry finished speaking he made his way out of the alley with Fred and Luna right behind him. Although they were in great danger at the moment the only thing Fred could think of was the haunted look that was in Harry's eyes while he was talking.

Coming out of the alleyway they spotted a group of about twenty of these new Death Eaters congregating around a group of captured witches and wizards in the square just outside of the Leaky Cauldron. There was about forty five being held and many were children. The three slipped silently across the street and started to move forward at a quick pace when one of the men grabbed hold of a woman, probably about twenty five years old, and immediately placed her under the Cruciatus curse. With only a deep rumbling growl as warning Harry instantly burst in to motion. Charging towards the group.

"Oh shit." Luna exclaimed as she and Fred rushed to catch up.

Neville, Ginny and her brother George somehow found themselves charging down the street like it was some kind of gauntlet. As they ran curses were flying all around from open windows, rooftops and from behind cover on the ground. Throwing themselves through the front window of Flourish and Blotts bought them at least a few minutes to get themselves together and think of a better way of getting this done.

“Why don’t one of you contact Harry and get them to come help us out?” George said panting slightly. Granted he would rather be somewhere else but at the moment he was having fun.

“No, their busy. Harry’s giving a lecture right now but right after that their going to fight.” George sat stunned by this response for a few moments before collecting himself.

“And just what would he be giving a lecture for right now and to who?”

“To Fred, the same lecture Ginny just gave you!” Neville informed him with a slight grin on his face.

“I don’t suppose he explained it any better then Ginny did?” Fred asked with indignation in his voice.

“I wouldn’t know but talk to him about it later. Harry is much better at explaining such things and he is much better with words. He probably studied philosophy as much if not more than magic. If you ever have a question about life, morals, ethics or any of that go to Harry. But I warn you, be prepared for a long conversation. Long, but very interesting.”

“Will you two knock it off? Talk later, now we have more important things to do!” Ginny snapped. Just mere seconds later the tell tale flash of green light of the killing curse came streaking towards Neville’s head from the back of the store. He had easily moved out of the curses path as George sent the man flying into the back wall with a perfectly aimed banishing charm.

“Thanks George!” Neville said calmly as he picked himself off the floor.

“No problem Neville.” George called back over his shoulder as he approached the unconscious Death Eater. Kicking the man’s wand aside George knelt beside the man to try to discern his identity. However, he was not ready for what he found. Letting out a loud gasp he drew the others attention to him.

“What’s wrong?” Ginny asked as she looked back from the window.

“Wood!” Was all he managed to get out. His shock and excitement from the nights events rendering him tongue tied. Ginny’s temper being what it was made her in no mood for cryptic responses.

“Wood? What the hell are you talking about?”

“Oliver Wood! It was Wood who sent the killing curse at Neville.” George answered after composing himself a little. And I do mean a little. It’s not everyday that you have a good friend try to kill you.

“Stun him and restrain him. He is definitely one we will want to question.” Ginny said as she stood over her former housemate, her voice as cold as ice. “But for

right now lets take the stairs and get on the roof. Most of the Death Eaters in this area seem to be on the roofs or upper levels of the surrounding buildings we will play hell at getting anything done from the street. Lets go!" As they made their way through the store towards the back room and the stairs George was watching his sister in shock. Sure he knew she was strong but he never imagined that he would actually be taking orders from her. Or at least orders that he felt completely comfortable following at least.

Slipping onto the roof in the cover of darkness the three slowly made their way towards two Death Eaters that were looking down over the edge apparently waiting for them to come back out the front door.

"Quick and silent!" Ginny whispered to Neville, just loud enough so George could hear. Then as if on a silent agreement, which Fred reminded himself it probably was, Ginny and Neville struck. Stalking quickly up behind their prey they each reached out to cover their mouths, and with what seemed to be the same movement, twisted their heads to the side until a sharp cracking sound seemed to fill the air leaving George standing with his face pale and his mouth hanging open gawking at his sister.

"Stop staring at me like that. Here put this on." Ginny told him as she threw him the red robe of one of the dead men as she put on the other. "The damage looks much worse from up here." She commented as she looked around as many stores burned, some buildings had collapsed completely, scattering rubble and debris up and down the street. She looked on sadly as black smoke billowed into the night, making a clear view to the street impossible, which she was thankful for. The sight of all those killed during this attack would surely wrench at her heart and make it hard to concentrate on the task at hand.

"Where are you going to get one?" George asked Neville after he had put on his robe and lifted the hood. As if to answer his question Neville flashed a winning grin and then shimmered into the form of a falcon. Launching himself into the air he flew overhead to the other side of the street where he promptly changed back and made quick work of the Death Eaters near by.

"Alright George I want you to stick right by my side. You do what I tell you to do when I tell you to do it no questions asked. Got it!" Ginny whispered harshly to her brother.

"Yes but why did Neville go over there?" George was clearly confused by all that had happened tonight and he was one that liked to know exactly what was going on.

"He's over there because it will be quicker if we work both sides of the street at the same time. Plus there are quite a bit more over there."

"Well if there are more over there than why didn't you go to help?"

"Because you can't fly so I would have to leave you here and you have no experience when it comes to close quarter fighting. But hey tonight seems to be a

good night for you to get that experience.” Ginny added the last bit as a really bad way to try and lighten the mood. It didn’t work.

“Where did Neville go? I can’t see him. Do you think he might have gotten hurt?” George and Neville were never very close friends but he had always liked him and the thought of him getting hurt or getting himself killed bothered him.

“If they put a scratch on Neville I would be greatly surprised and impressed. He’s the only one I have ever seen go head to head with Harry and come out without something broken. Harry didn’t break anything either but that is still one hell of an accomplishment. He is also the best of all of us when it comes to moving around without being seen. He’s probably halfway to Gringotts by now with all the Death Eaters between his position and where he started either dead or completely incapacitated. So we better get moving.” Ginny, with a little help from George, was making quick work of those Death Eaters on their side of the roof tops.

After jumping to the next rooftop across Ginny found herself staring down the length of a wand as two other men moved up behind her on either side. Although the man could not see her face it was clear from his stance that he knew she was not supposed to be there.

“Who are you?” He asked harshly. A moment later one of the men behind her ripped the hood off her head exposing her face and that tell tale Weasley red hair. After realizing who she was, the man before her seemed to feel Christmas had come early. “My, my, my. It’s the little Weasley bitch. My master will surely reward me graciously for this.” He said as the two men behind her chuckled. Ginny however just sneered.

“My god you are all alike. Talking trash when you should be fighting. Do you have any idea how many men like you I have killed because they thought it was more important to run their mouths rather than act.” She taunted the man.

“Well if you really feel that way then I will just have to kill you.” The man said as he raised his wand up again. Just seconds later Ginny received a sharp kick in the back of the leg and she launched herself on to the man before her. It was not hard to disarm him and stun him. Picking herself up off the ground she dusted herself off and turned to look at the men behind her. Both were lying on the ground, in fact one seemed to be lying on top of the other, and neither were moving. Quickly Ginny rushed over to them.

“George are you ok? Come on, say something.” She practically shouted at her brother who was lying on top of the other. George seemed to be in some kind of shock. He did not speak, move or even breath. All he did was stare into the face of the man beneath him. Ginny began shaking her brother violently, trying to get some kind of reaction from him. “George snap out of it god damn it. Get the fuck up.” She screamed in his ear as she slapped him sharply across the face.

Slowly George came around and sat with his back against the ledge where he wept bitterly. Ginny had no idea what was going on. For her entire life she had never seen any of her brothers cry, she didn’t think they knew how. Not knowing what had

brought this on she simply took his hand in hers to try to calm him down. When she picked his hand up she heard something fall from it and looked down in shock and grief. Lying on the ground beside her brother was a long polished steel dagger. The blade was a good twelve inches long and most of it was covered with blood. The blood of the man lying at her brother's feet. A dead man.

Over the many years Ginny had forgotten how she had reacted the first time she had killed a human being but seeing her brother now quickly jogged her memory. Upon hearing shouted commands and hurried movements Ginny looked over the ledge and saw that the Aurors had arrived. Knowing that Neville could handle himself along with the Aurors she decided she was going to stay with George so she sat back down and pulled her brother in to a tight hug and just sat there as he let out his grief, anger and remorse. At the time George had no way of knowing that at nearly the same instant his brother was going through identical struggles with his conscience and fears.

It was as if red lenses had been placed over Harry's eyes. Everything he looked at was red, everyone he looked at was red. His blood was boiling in his veins and pounding in his ears. He could hear nothing but the screams of the woman as the Death Eater held her under the Cruciatus curse. He could feel nothing but the pounding of blood in his head as the screams tore at his ears. He could see nothing but red.

Without warning Harry fell upon the un-expecting Death Eaters. When he reached the group he quickly ran the blade of his sword through the leader's ribs, killing him almost instantly as the young woman's limp body fell back to the ground. Most of the other Death Eaters were too shocked at Harry's sudden appearance to do much of anything so three more went down before they began to fight back.

When Luna and Fred had jumped into the fray the air was thick with powerful curses being shot in all directions as Harry seemed to disappear then reappear just as quickly somewhere else within their ranks. Fred was about to disarm a Death Eater when his wand was knocked from his hand by a falling enemy, sending it scattering across the square. He was about to make a run for it when he saw a man pointing his wand at Luna's back. With no time at all to think he quickly pulled his dagger, identical to his brothers.

Luna was fighting fierce and hard. All around her Death Eaters were falling. While searching for a new opponent she heard a harsh voice behind her speaking those two most horrible words.

"Avada Kedav....." The spell was never finished and when Luna turned to look at the caster she saw why. The man had fallen down to his knees with a look of abject shock on his face. His hood had fallen back to reveal light brown hair and pale blue eyes that were wide with shock and fear. Behind him Fred sat in pretty much the same position, with many of the same thoughts and emotions shining behind the tears in his eyes.

As the Death Eater slumped limply to the ground Fred removed his dagger from the man's side, just below the left arm pit. When he looked up once again he realized that the Aurors had arrived and the fight was over before he lowered his head once

more. He had no doubts that it was over before these 'reinforcements' had shown up but he had too much on his mind to think at the moment.

"Fred?" When he did not look up Harry tried again with better success. "Come on, we have to check out the damage and see about any more survivors." He said as he looked down at one of the men he had come to think of as a brother with sadness welling up inside him. Holding out his hand he helped Fred to his feet and began walking down the street.

'Gin, how is everything going?' Harry asked her telepathically.

'The fight is going well I guess. The Aurors showed up about ten minutes ago and started beating the Death Eaters back. At the moment I'm up on a roof with George. He had to kill a man and he is not taking it well.' Ginny replied in a quiet voice as a tear rolled down her cheek.

'Yeah, the same with Fred! His wand was knocked out of his hand so he had to use his dagger on a Death Eater that was about to kill Luna.' This immediately peaked Ginny's interest.

'Dagger? George used one to! Where did they get them? From what I can tell they are very well made and would cost a fortune.'

'They got them from me!' Harry replied, his voice dripping with guilt. 'After my last class in the school armory they decided to be a little bold and try to grab them. They were successful. After that they tried to grab a sword which did not end well.'

'I thought you charmed those weapons to break anyone's arm if they grabbed them without your permission.'

'No, I did not charm them. The charm has always been there. You can only remove a weapon from the wall if that weapon chooses you. It's very much like a wand choosing its owner. Well I have got to looking over the damage, you just stay there with George and I will keep an eye on Fred.'

'Thank you Harry.'

'Neville, where are you?'

'At the moment I am sitting outside of Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlor, with a porch full of Death Eaters. I am enjoying a rather delicious hot fudge Sunday while having a rather delightful conversation, not to mention insightful, with Madam Florean about thin cauldron bottoms. Seriously, from what I was told I thought only Percy cared about such things. Or at least cared enough to have a serious conversation about them.' Harry grinned to himself for a few moments before speaking again. Since Neville had lost his shy and self-conscious behavior he found that he actually liked talking to people, no matter what the topic at hand was or who it was for that matter.

'So how many Death Eaters did you capture?' Harry asked after he stifled a

laugh.

‘I’ve got twelve here and the Aurors are rounding up those that are still here. I figured that I would take a break and let them deal with the rest. After all, they need a little fun in their lives to. But there’s something bothering me.’

‘Yeah and what’s that?’

‘The anti-apperation wards. There not up anymore.’ Neville replied in confusion.

‘Ok, your point being what exactly?’

‘My point is, if there is nothing keeping them from just apperating out of here, then why are they staying when they are now severely out numbered not to mention out classed?’ After saying this both Neville and Harry froze.

“DEVERSION” They both yelled out loud and simultaneously disappeared in an instant.

Harry and Neville reappeared within the Great Hall of Hogwarts in the middle of what looked like a full scale war. The teachers and most of the student body were trying to fight off a massive group of Death Eaters that had apparently burst into the hall during the Halloween ball. Many of the younger students and a few older ones, Draco and his little group of friends among them, were crouched down against the wall behind the professors table at the back of the hall.

Harry quickly scanned the hall and was both sad and enraged to see a number of students lying dead upon the floor. Bringing his mind back to the situation at hand, he looked up to see most of the older students fighting fiercely to protect those younger than them and each other and he was proud to note that most of them he had trained in his class. And at the forefront was Ron, Hermione and Blasie Zambini. But the one fighting the strongest was someone Harry knew very well and it shocked him that he was here.

“Forge?”

Forge had a look of absolute fury on his face as he fought his way through the ranks of Death Eaters with so much savagery and sheer vengeance that most, students, teachers, and Death Eaters alike, were wise enough to get out of his way at any cost. Those that were foolhardy enough to try their luck against the trainer of warriors soon found themselves joining the countless others that had fallen under his blade. Harry was quick to note, and a little surprised that many of these Death Eaters were not carrying simply just their wands but also other forms of weapons such as swords and daggers.

Harry and Neville both jumped into the fray without a second thought on the matter and the Death Eaters, who were already beginning to be pushed back by the determination of the students and the sheer wrath of Forge, soon broke and were being driven back out on to the grounds where the promptly made a run for it towards the Forbidden Forest. Harry, Neville and Forge pursued the men into the forest but

found no trace of them anywhere. After ten minutes of looking and finding nothing they gave up.

“Portkeys!” Harry bit out in disgust. “What the hell happened?” He asked Forge as they made their way back up to the school.

“They showed up not long after you left for Diagon Alley. It was clearly a setup to get you four out of the castle so they could hit Hogwarts with a much better chance of success. They just burst through the doors and began firing curses before the doors were even open completely. Several student went down before anyone knew what the hell was going on. After the eleventh student was killed I couldn’t take it anymore and came down here. Normally I refuse to involve myself in the wars and conflicts of this world but I draw the line at massacring a whole castle full of children.....” Forge suddenly stopped short as they re-entered the Great Hall to see the sight before them.

Teachers and students alike were restraining captured Death Eaters and carefully placing the dead and wounded on stretchers and floating them up to the hospital wing. Everywhere you looked there were mournful faces. There were few exceptions. You had students crying over dead friends and siblings. Teachers crying over dead colleges and children. But five figures caught Harry’s attention above all others. All well known to Harry leaning over a sixth. His blood went cold as he recognized the five and instinctually knew who the other must be.

Harry moved slowly towards the small group as his heart seemed to beat against his ribs without mercy and his breath became shallow and ragged. As he neared, Professor McGonagall looked up at him with pain and anguish in her eyes as tears spilled over her eyelashes and ran down her pale cheeks. Her hands were tightly clasped around one wrinkled hand as Professor Snape held another as tears welled up in his eyes as well. Professor Dumbledore, for his part, looked to be completely calm as Madam Pomfrey slowly removed the sword that was sticking out through the right side of his chest and the three Marauders looked about to have had a collective stroke. He grimaced a bit when the sword was removed but other than that he showed no sign of pain as he looked into Harry’s shining green eyes.

“Would you be so kind as to give Harry and I a moment?” He asked politely. Madam Pomfrey was shocked at this request.

“But Headmaster, we have to get you to the hospital wing right away.” The nurse said. Her shock clearly showing in her voice. Dumbledore however looked at her in amusement for a moment.

“You know as well as I do that I will not survive. So I would like to take this opportunity to speak with my grandson if you don’t mind.” Those present could do nothing but stare for a moment before nodding and giving Harry and Dumbledore some space. As they were walking off Harry distinctly heard Snape muttering about Dumbledore and his damn fool Gryffindor pride. At hearing this both Harry and Albus could not help but laugh which sent Albus into a coughing fit. Then a thought struck Harry.

“Phoenix tears. They will heal this wound easily.” To this Dumbledore merely

shook his head.

“No, Fawks has already tried.” It was only now that Harry noticed that the beautiful red and gold bird was sitting next to Dumbledore’s head as he softly stroked his feathered head. “Take care of him Harry. Fawks has a habit of getting into trouble. I think he does it strictly to get attention. Modesty is something you should teach him.” Dumbledore grinned and stifled a laugh when Fawks gave him a piercing stare of indignation. But knowing phoenixes the way he did he knew it was good natured and that Fawks was hurting terribly at the imminent loss of his master. For a moment Harry let his eyes roam over the sword that had essentially killed his grandfather. Overall it was a nice looking blade, not particularly well crafted but strong none the less. Suddenly he got a strange feeling of recognition as he looked at it but did not have time to think on it before Dumbledore began speaking once more.

“Now Harry, with me gone Minerva will be appointed as Headmistress. What I want you to do is help her out by taking on the responsibility of protecting the school and the students. Without them we have no future. I have spoken with her about this and she agrees that you are the best choice for this responsibility. You have known for a long while now that the fate of not just the wizarding world but all of it is in your hands. You must lead this fight. Always listen to your heart and not your anger, hate or fear. That will lead only to your defeat. Now one last thing.” He said tiredly as he brought his head up.

“What’s that?”

“For Merlin’s sake boy ask her out already. Hold her hand, give her a kiss, anything, just do something. I have waited quite sometime to say that. Just remember that I will always be proud of you just as your parents would be. Now go, send me up to my chambers. I would much rather be alone in my own bed then die on a cold floor.” After a few moments Harry sent his grandfather up to his chambers with a wave of his hand. Even when he knew he was dying he still had to urge him towards Ginny and there was still that ever present twinkle in his eye like he knew everything would turn out alright. But Harry couldn’t see how. He remained on the floor for nearly an hour before he stood up to leave the Great Hall for a walk around the lake.

To all those that watched him leave, he no longer looked like Harry Potter ‘the boy who lived’, or the heir of Gryffindor, Slytherin, and Merlin. He did not look like the Phoenix Lord or even a powerful wizard. He looked like a battered and bruised man.

A beaten man.

A broken man.

But appearances can be deceiving.

After walking out of the castle and onto the grounds Harry looked up at the night’s sky, stars twinkling brightly. The cold night air seemed inviting and he soon lost interest in the lake. With the tearing of the back of his leather tunic he released his wings and took off into the dark October sky, flying swiftly over the Forbidden Forest.

Suddenly Harry released a powerful cry of anguish as he dove down only to shoot back up again. For miles in every direction people jerked awake and small children woke screaming as Harry's cry tore at their ears and wrenched at their hearts. It did not sound like the cry of a man but rather of some wounded beast. A wild, untamable beast that would not give up! He would not bend over or kneel to anyone. He will make damn sure that the people of both the muggle and magical worlds need not worry about some madman locking them up in subservience. The people will have their victory.

At any cost!

Within Hogwarts all who heard Harry's cry briefly forgot their grief and were filled with determination and the hope that they could make a difference when all else had given up. It seemed as if Harry had in a way transferred some of his strength to them as they found a new resolve. Never again will they stand by while others fight and die. They will never again let the feelings of fear and hopelessness dominate their minds. Never again will the defenses of Hogwarts fall.

Miles away Lord Maul was standing before a sea of his followers. Carefully hidden away deep within the mountains of the Highlands of Scotland, Lord Maul was comfortable with the knowledge that Harry Potter and his friends could not find him. With his face hidden beneath the hood of his cloak, he smiled down at Lucius Malfoy as he reported the success of their attack on Diagon Alley. They did not need to win the fight. Lord Maul knew that to be nearly impossible. But Potter had been lured out of Hogwarts and in a well planned attack Albus Dumbledore received wounds from which he would not recover. Wounds he received from Lord Maul himself.

"Excellent! You prepared well Lucius. We had the time we needed and seventy of my people is a very acceptable loss in exchange for the death of Dumbledore. His death will surely have broken Potter's will. It may even be easier than expected to defeat him in battle. That is of course if he even still has the will to fight." Lord Maul gave a sudden, harsh, humorless laugh before he walked to an opening in the rock to look up at the stars. When he spoke again it was with sheer venom in his voice. "The 'feared Harry', the 'Angel of Death', 'Phoenix Lord'! Those empty titles will not prevent me from killing him. I will have my vengeance and he will have to come up with something better than some cute new potion of his to defeat me this time." Lord Maul's deep harsh voice was cut off by a deep rumbling cry. Though no one saw the source, they all knew where it came from and more importantly, who it came from. The gathered Death Eaters flinched back from the sheer pain and rage held within it. Standing before them Lord Maul, whose face went pale as death, began thinking that killing Dumbledore may have been a very big mistake.

Harry flew for what seemed like days and when he was finished he could think of only one place to go. So with a single thought he vanished.

Forge was sitting in his sitting room putting away the best side of a bottle of scotch when someone suddenly appeared in front of him. It took him several minutes to get his eyes focused on the man standing in front of him. After rubbing his eyes for a moment he looked up to see Harry looking down at him with just a small bit of amusement in his eyes.

“Harry my boy, pull up a seat and have drink. My guests seem to have had their fill.” Forge slurred out as he waved his bottle in the direction of the opposite chairs. Looking behind him Harry was shocked to see Sirius and Peter passed out. “The other bloke came back here with us but he couldn’t indulge. Said something or another about position compositions or whatever. He’s been in the library for a few hours now. Some people when they feel pain they hurt themselves or others. Some chase the wenches and some drink.” He said as he took a sip, spilling half the bottle down his robes. “That man however, he reads.” Then Forge promptly dropped the bottle and passed out. Shaking his head Harry turned and walked down the corridor towards the library.

Opening the door Harry found no sign of Remus. Walking down the rows of shelves failed to turn up any sign either. So Harry left to look for his friend else where when suddenly...

“Ouch, god damn it!” Recognizing that voice and where it came from, he ran full speed down the corridor towards his own library. When he threw the door open it took all the self control Harry had to prevent himself from falling on the floor in gales of laughter.

There was Remus, standing in the middle of the floor facing the first row of books. The only thing out of the ordinary was that he was standing on one foot, with the other stretched out to the side. He had his left arm hanging down at his side with his hand turned up where as his right arm was stretched out in front of him. His head however seemed to be turned in a direction Harry did not think possible for a human. It looked almost like a condor with its long neck turned so it’s head was upside down.

“Need any help Remus?” Harry asked with a grin. This sudden interruption startled the marauder into moving slightly.

“Harry? Ouch.. shit! Nah I got it. I found if I stay in this position and creep forward using my toes, I will not get shocked by whatever it is that’s shocking me.” It was only after he said this that Harry realized that Remus had only one shoe on. Deciding that Remus clearly wasn’t going to give up until he had at least one of those books in his hand, Harry lowered the wards with a wave of his hand. Stepping into the room he walked up to stand by Remus’ side.

“Are you sure you don’t want any help?” Harry could no longer keep his laughter in as Remus nearly had a heart attack as he fell over. Far from being offended, he looked at Harry with a grin and walked up to the books he so much wanted to see.

“What in Merlin’s name was that?” He asked as he scanned the titles.

“That was one of the wards I keep on my library. Like I told you all at the beginning of the year, I rigged this place to keep everyone from instantly coming to get the answers from my books when they should be out looking for those answers themselves. I also warded the library I set up in Gryffindor’s chamber at Hogwarts which is much smaller. Of course Albus had already read half of my books before I

set all this up.” Silence followed this last statement as both thought of Professor Dumbledore.

“Did you see it happen?” Harry asked after a few minutes of silence.

“No. From what we could find no one did. It was not until after the Death Eaters were driven out of the castle that he was found.” Remus replied with unshed tears in his eyes as he removed a book from the shelf.

No one saw it happen? How in the hell could that be. The hall was filled with people, some just watching in fear. How is it that no one saw?

“The well!” Harry said suddenly as he dragged a startled and confused Remus Lupin out of the library.

“Ok Harry what is this?” Remus asked when he reached a plain white room with nothing in it save an ordinary looking well sitting in the center of the floor.

“A well. What does it look like?” He replied as he stopped right before it. When Remus approached and looked into the well he was shocked to see scenes of the battle playing out before him.

“How is this possible? Well what are you looking for exactly?”

“I’m looking for precisely this.” Harry said as he pointed out the scene. It showed Professor Dumbledore fighting back strongly against the wave of Death Eaters pouring in threw the doors of the Great Hall. There was no sign of the frail old looking headmaster here. There was only the very picture of strength and power. And then it happened.

As Dumbledore fought with all he had against a hail of curse being sent his way by a group of Death Eaters, there seemed to be a shimmer and in the next instant there was a man behind Harry’s grandfather. In a single swift movement the man plunged a sword into the side of the old headmaster before there was another shimmer and the man was gone.

“What the hell was that? A man just appeared, killed Albus then disappeared again.” Remus asked hurriedly. Harry however was seething.

“No. He did not just appear and disappear. He was just moving to fast to see him properly.” When Remus looked at Harry he was already looking in to the well again. This time he saw the seen much closer and slower. “See, here he comes.” The unknown figure moved slowly across the floor as he approached Albus. He was wearing a long dark purple robe. So dark it almost seemed black. When the man pulled his sword Harry froze the scene and studied every possible detail. Suddenly Harry pulled back swiftly and seemed as if he was choking on his own tongue.

“Harry, Harry are you alright?” Remus shouted as he repeatedly slapped Harry on the back. “Come on Harry.” Harry seemed not to notice Remus was there anymore. He simply sat slumped against the wall continuously muttering ‘impossible’ over and

over again. Not knowing what was going on Remus did the only thing he could think to do. Get help.

It took him some time to get Forge, Sirius, and Peter on their feet again. In the end he had to levitate them into the air and bombard them with icy water while he was shaking them.

“Moony, what was that for?” Sirius asked heatedly.

“Something is wrong with Harry!” Remus said quickly as they raced towards the well.

“What? What happened?”

“I don’t know. We were looking into that well thing to find out how Albus had been hit with that sword. While watching we saw that someone had moved in behind him so fast that you would barely notice he was ever there. Harry slowed the scene down and when he saw the man draw his sword he fell back against the wall. I don’t know why but all he is saying is ‘impossible’. He just keeps saying that over and over.” The others were about to ask what was impossible when they entered the room. Harry was still on the floor muttering to himself.

When Forge bent down to look in the troubled man’s face Harry suddenly reached up and pulled Forge’s collar until the two men were at eye level. The wild look in his eyes instantly told Forge that whatever Harry had seen was very serious.

“Look! Look at that son of a bitch!” Harry ground out from behind clenched teeth, pointing toward the well. Nodding his head Forge backed up and turned to look inside. Looking in at the scene that had been frozen still Forge let his eyes roam until he caught sight of the man behind Dumbledore. Looking for anything that could be construed as disturbing about the figure.

“What am I looking for exactly?” Forge asked quietly. He did not particularly like watching a highly respected friend die in slow motion.

“Three things. First the sword. Then, the back of his hand. And finally his sash, just behind his left arm.” Harry’s voice was low and filled with anguish and guilt. Forge looked for a moment before he stiffened up with a sharp intake of breath then turned swiftly to look at Harry.

“Any one could have a mark like that. And the sword, it was probably just similar.” He was about to go on when Harry summoned the sword in question. Holding it up so Forge could see it Harry threw the sword down at Forge’s feet without even looking at it himself.

“It’s the same damn sword. We were both there when he made it. And the medallion he has hanging from his sash is the one he stole from me when he grabbed his sword and made a run for it. That is why we couldn’t track Lord Maul’s movements. Because the son of a bitch knows how we do it.” The three Marauders were looking on in total incomprehension and shock at the exchange between the two

men.

“Um, excuse me but what exactly is going on?” Remus asked a little nervously. Harry just looked at the four men with him before turning away.

“Forge you explain it to them. I need to go speak with an old friend.” And with that Harry left.

“Um, who is he going to talk to?” Sirius asked curiously.

“Judging by the events of last night, the situation now and his rather volatile mood, he is probably going to see Sun Yi.” Forge replied sadly.

“Who?” All three Marauders asked at once.

“Sun Yi. A former emperor of China. He was a great man, very wise. Much like Albus. He has probably been one of the greatest friends Harry has ever had. But anyway back to the subject at hand. Where any of you present when Harry explained when he created the Blood of Jericho?”

“No, we only heard about at the meeting the day after the north tower was blown up.”

“Ok well Harry created it hoping that it would be a powerful truth serum. The day after it was finished both Harry and I participated in a battle so vast it lasted for nearly four days of constant battle. As Harry knows I normally will not involve myself, directly, in the events of the world. But this battle was something different. Not because of the scale or the vast numbers but because one of the men fighting for one army was a man that I had trained with some assistance from Harry. The man’s name was Jericho from the house of Yorn in northern Germany. That is where the name of the potion came from. He wasn’t a remarkable looking guy. Looked simply like an average guy in every respect, no one would think him to be powerful by looking at him. He had a large dark round birth mark on the back of his right hand. He was a good student, learned quickly but was always taking short cuts which neither Harry or I would stand for. Naturally we both took it very personally when he used what we taught him for evil.” The three Marauder’s attention was solely focused on Forge. Their shoes could catch fire and they probably wouldn’t notice.

“When Harry was finished purging their bodies of the Blood’s influence one man lay dead while another was nearly brain dead. Jericho however was completely insane. This was before Harry had found that potion that reverses such damage so there was no helping him. Later when Harry wasn’t watching him he made a run for it. Grabbed his sword and a medallion that Harry had received as a thank you from Chang Hu, Sun Yi’s father. Well Harry and a friend of his pursued Jericho for about ten miles to some canyon running through China.

When they finally caught up he was waving his sword in the air like a stark raving lunatic. He began screaming about vengeance and all that useless crap then promptly jumped off the edge into the canyon.” Forge finished with a pained look on his face and a haunted look in his eyes.

“Ok, and what has this got to do with Dumbledore’s death?” Everyone turned to look at Sirius as if he had just said the stupidest thing in the world.

“What?”

“Padfoot come here!” Remus ordered as he stood next to the well. “Now look in there. Look at the man behind Albus. The sword he has in his right hand, it’s the same sword that is lying on the floor right there behind you. Now look at the man’s right hand. Do you see the large round mark on the back of his hand. Now look at his sash, right there on the left. I’m guessing that is the same medallion that was given to Harry and then stolen by..?” Remus prompted.

“You think that Lord Maul is Jericho?” Sirius yelled.

“No we don’t think he is Lord Maul. After seeing this we know it’s him. He deliberately left his sword there for Harry to find. He knew that Harry would recognize it. He wanted Harry to know who did this. His hatred for Harry has always been great since he finished his training here. And that hate has had nine hundred years to fester.” Forge stated with venom in his voice.

“But leaving the sword there for Harry to find I can understand. However he wasn’t there to see either the mark or the medallion.”

“Padfoot you really are half a moron.” Wormtail stated. “Haven’t you been listening? This guy trained here with Harry and Forge so he would know about this well and the fact that Harry would watch the attack to find out who stuck that sword into Dumbledore.”

“Peter I’m impressed. You sure have gotten sharp over the years.” Remus congratulated his old friend.

“Well being locked up at the Malfoy’s for fifteen years left me with no choice but to become very observant.”

“You three better get back to Hogwarts. Remus will have to prepare for tonight. If Harry doesn’t show up by then I will be there to observe and make sure nothing goes wrong. But since you are the defense and dueling professors you really should be there right now.” Forge told them sadly. The three Marauders nodded sadly as Forge sent them back.

After the Marauders returned to Hogwarts Forge waited for a week before Harry returned. When he first appeared Forge was worried that his visit had only served to strengthen Harry’s anger, pain and depression. But as he came closer Forge saw what seemed to be closer and acceptance in the man’s eyes. Taking a seat across from Forge, he began to speak.

“I told him everything. About me, where I come from, what I’ve done. Everything.” Harry began with no emotion showing in his eyes.

“Do you think that was wise. If he were to say somethi...” Harry waved Forge into silence before starting again.

“He died in his sleep later that night. But before that he said something that I had heard before but only now do I understand its full meaning.” He said with a sad smile.

“And what was that?” Forge asked curiously.

“He said ‘What’s coming will come and you will have to meet it when it does.’ My friend Hagrid said basically the same thing at the end of my fourth year. I thought I knew what he meant at the time but then I had my doubts. It wasn’t until Sun Yi said it that I truly knew what that means.”

“And it means what exactly?”

“Don’t worry about the past because it cannot be changed. Focus on the present and let the future worry about itself.”

“That’s very wise. Then again philosophy was never my thing so it could be pure gibberish for all I know but it sounds good nonetheless.”

“When was the memorial service?” Harry asked in a sudden turn of conversation. Forge sighed sadly before answering.

“The evening of November first. I take it you won’t be going?”

“No. To be perfectly honest I don’t think I could take it. I will go back on November second so could you oversee Remus’s transformation?”

“I already did. It went extremely well. Remus had control nearly all night.”

“Alright well I’m going to get going.” Harry said as he stood to leave when Forge noticed a new air of determination about Harry.

“What are you going to do Harry?” He asked nervously.

“Just going to make some changes.” He stated simply just before he disappeared.

On the morning of November second nearly everyone within Hogwarts sat in silence while they ate their breakfast. The memories of the events of Halloween and the memorial service the following day left most with not much desire to talk.

“Why do you think Harry didn’t come to the service?” Ron suddenly asked his sister. Even though he spoke in a whisper, the silence in the Great Hall seemed to project his words to all corners.

“I don’t know. When I spoke to Sirius he said that he had discovered something that was very disturbing and gone to see a friend.”

“What did he find?” Hermione asked as she joined the conversation.

“We don’t know. Neither Forge nor the Marauders will tell us. But with Albus gone this doesn’t surprise me. Though he may not show it much anymore, he always blames himself for every life that is lost. And many were lost the other day.” Neville muttered as he stared down at his plate.

‘Ginny, Neville, Luna?’ Came a sudden voice. Nearly everyone within the Great Hall stared at the three aforementioned people in confusion. At the sound of their names being called all three nearly jumped out of their skin and fell out of their seats.

‘Harry?’ They all called out at once.

‘Yeah it’s me.’ Harry’s amused voice sounded in their heads. ‘Get Ron, Hermione, Blasie, Susan Bones, Hannah Abbot, Cho, Roger Davies and the four heads of house and meet me in the headmaster’s office. Oh and bring the Marauders as well. Get there as soon as possible. We have an awful lot of work to do.’

“Come on guys we got to go.” Neville said as he walked over to the Hufflepuff table as Luna got her house mates and Blasie.

“Now Miss Weasley what is this all about?” Professor McGonagall asked as they made their way up the stairs to her office.

“I’m not sure professor. Harry just instructed us to get the group of you and bring you up here. He said nothing more than that except that we had work to do.” Ginny replied.

“Potters back?” Blasie asked as Professor McGonagall opened the door at the top of the stairs.

“Yes Blasie I’m back. Now everyone take a seat, I have a lot to say and a lot of work to do.” McGonagall sat down before she smiled sadly and stood to sit behind the desk. After everyone was seated and looking at him expectantly Harry began.

“First off Ginny, Neville, Luna and I will no longer be attending classes. Our sole concern and responsibility will be the fight against Lord Maul and the defense of this school and its students. And before Hermione says anything about not graduating, here you go.” Harry said as he handed the Headmistress a small stack of papers. “Those are my transcripts, NEWT results and graduation papers from my previous times here. I’m sure the others could give you their own as well.” As if on queue the others produced their papers with a slight wave of their hands and handed them to McGonagall.

“Ok, um, everything ah, seems to be in order.” She replied. Obviously Harry’s little announcement had taken her by surprise and she had not yet recovered.

“Ok before we go on can you tell me how many casualties we suffered?” Harry asked in a quiet voice. Everyone sat in silence until Remus answered soberly.

“At Diagon Alley sixty three were killed with another two hundred wounded.

Here we lost sixteen students and four professors and the Headmaster.”

“Who?” Harry managed to choke out.

“Professor Sinistra, Madam Hooch, Professor Sprout and Professor Grubley-Plank. Among the students were Seamus, Blasie’s friend Christopher Manard, Terry Boot, Padma Patil, Lisa Turpin, Dennis Creevy and a number of others were killed fighting. A few such as Goyle and Pansy Parkinson were killed by stray curses. There are about twenty three students and two professors still in the hospital wing but they are all expected to make it. Over all at both Diagon Alley and here, we captured just over forty Death Eaters and roughly thirty were killed.” As Ginny spoke Harry looked around sharply and felt a strong pain in his heart when he realized that he had heard right and Professor Spout was gone.

“What was done with those that were captured?” Harry asked harshly after he had time to let everything sink in.

“Most were taken to the Ministry. But Luna and I brought thirteen, including Oliver Wood back here with us. We locked them up in the Hall of the Phoenix and kept them unconscious until you returned.” Ginny stated.

“Yeah many of the Aurors were upset about that but Minister Weasley and Madam Bones both know that your interrogation methods are much more affective than any they could probably think of.” Luna added. After a few more minutes of silence Harry stood and walked behind the desk to open up the entrance to the Hall of the Phoenix.

“What are you going to do Potter?” Snape asked quickly.

“I’m going to go find out Wood’s reason for trying to kill Ginny, Neville and George professor. I want to know if he serves Lord Maul willingly. I don’t like having people trying to kill my friends.” He said stiffly as he dropped through the floor to the hall below.

“Wakey wakey Oliver!” Harry said as he gave Oliver Wood a sharp slap across the face. Opening his eyes and blinking furiously, Oliver turned his gaze towards Harry. Blind panic flashed through his eyes as his breathing became ragged and he struggled to move against the invisible bonds holding him in place.

“Oliver you have been a very naughty boy. This could either be easy on you or extremely difficult. But rest assured that I will get the answers I need even if I have to rip your toenails out, one by one. Now how would you like to proceed?” Harry finished as Wood’s eyes grew wide in terror.

“I..I, will answer your questions.” He answered in a stutter.

“Excellent! Now it’s not as if I don’t trust or believe you, well yes it is, but I am going to have to make sure.” Harry said as he withdrew his ever ready vial of Purple Skies.

“What’s that?” Oliver asked nervously. As answer to his question Harry’s lips turned up in an intimidating grin. It did not help his peace of mind to see nearly everyone else in the room shuddered at the sight of the potion in Harry’s hand. Many even turn and left.

“It’s my guarantee that the answers I get are accurate. You tell the truth and nothing happens. But if you lie, you will feel pain five times more powerful than the Cruciatus curse is capable of inflicting. Now as a gesture of good faith I am going to ask if you will take this willingly.” Oliver remained silent for a moment before agreeing. When the potion had taken effect Harry started asking questions.

“How long have you served Lord Maul?”

“Since just before the attack on Azkaban. The Faithful began rounding many of us up shortly before to assist with the attack.” Wood responded with a haunted tone in his voice.

“The Faithful, who are they?” Professor McGonagall asked in confusion.

“They are those who follow willingly. There are three levels of his servants. Those of us on the first level are only referred to as servants. Those of second are the Faithful. And the third are known as the Deaths Head. Many of them were once members of Voldemort’s inner circle.”

“What is it that he has over you that would force you to join him?” Neville asked scathingly. Oliver paused for a moment before answering with tears in his eyes.

“He murdered my parents while they were on vacation in Germany. He then kidnapped my sixth month old brother and five year old sister. Most of those referred to servants are in the same position. Every so often we are shown our loved ones and told that they will continue to live as long as we continue to follow our orders. I was forced to watch as Lord Maul, himself, murdered my baby brother. He assured me that my sister would follow if I refused to obey.” Harry waited a few minutes to get his rage under control before he began again.

“Where is he based?” Snape asked with a very fine edge in his voice.

“I don’t know. We had specially designed Portkeys implanted in our bodies. When we were summoned it took us straight to him. In the event of capture they were designed to dissolve and leave no trace. All any of us know is that it is underground or in a cave of some kind.”

“What kind of numbers are we talking about and who make up the Faithful and the Deaths Head?”

“We were never allowed to know the identities of those above us. The only one anyone was sure about was Lucius Malfoy. Roughly fifty men and women make up the Deaths Head and another five or six hundred or so for the Faithful. The servants however number in the thousands.”

“If you outnumbered them so much why did you not turn on them and free your sister?” Blasie nearly screamed. Oliver however took no notice of her tone.

“You fail to grasp our position Zambini. Lord Maul is no blind fool like Voldemort who will accept anyone into his ranks as long as they grovel at his feet. Those of the Faithful are all powerful and the Deaths Head even more so. He will not accept those he feels are unworthy. His ‘servants’ only purpose is to serve basically as suicide troops. As with the attack on Diagon Alley, we are to be used in such a fashion to keep the Aurors busy while the Faithful and Deaths Head see to the primary objective. We are accompanied with just enough of the Faithful to be sure that we carry out our orders.” After saying this Harry’s rage reached the point to where he could no longer contain it.

In a swift movement Harry’s right hand lashed out and clutched at Oliver’s neck. Seemingly without ease Harry lifted the man off the ground and pinned him to the wall with his feet a good two and a half feet off the ground. Harry’s eyes were burning with rage as they bore into the other man.

“You were not sent to Diagon Alley to distract the Aurors. You were sent to distract me. While myself, Neville, Luna, and Ginny were fighting to stop your slaughter, Lord Maul and his other followers breached Hogwarts.” The look in Wood’s eyes quickly turned from terror, because of Harry’s rage, to horror at what he had helped happen. “Sixteen students were killed, murdered. Most were under fifteen years old. Children! And they obviously had more balls than you. Four professors murdered. As well as Professor Dumbledore.” Harry’s triad was cut short when Woods face began to turn dark purple color. He quickly dropped the other man just as his skin became totally black and seemed to begin to decompose. Everyone present looked on in shock and horror. The scene before them looked much like time lapsed photography. Showing the natural deterioration of the human body only at a much more rapid pace. The awful stench given off caused most with the confines of the chamber to flee as they gagged on the air surrounding them. The only ones that seemed unaffected by the awful smell seemed to be Harry, Ginny and Snape. However the sight sent the latter two fleeing with the rest. Harry however looked down at the body of his former team captain in revulsion.

Twenty minutes later Harry made his way back into Professor McGonagall’s office where the others were attempting to recover from their less than enjoyable experience. Taking his seat he looked up to see everyone staring at him in shock.

“How in the name of Merlin could you stay down there?” Sirius asked. Harry however ignored the question.

“All the others are dead as well. It would seem that though special Portkeys were also a means to make sure that any followers that may be captured would not be able to give away information.”

“Incase you forgot Potter, he gave away a bit of information.” Harry took a few deep breaths before continuing.

“Professor McGonagall, I could probably guarantee that the ministry got nothing

out of their prisoners, who are also dead. So when Mr. Weasley contacts you any minute now please ask him to come here. The information Wood gave us served no real strategic importance. Those 'special' portkeys probably served to kill any followers before giving away anything of real importance."

Just as Harry finished saying this Professor McGonagall was contacted by Mr. Weasley to inform her that all those taken to the Ministry were also dead. Everyone, now including Mr. Weasley, Mr. Diggory and Madam Bones, looked at Harry expectantly.

"The bottom line is that Lord Maul is screwing with, more specifically me." Everyone looked startled at this statement.

"What do you mean by that Harry?" Mr. Weasley asked. Harry hesitated for a number of minutes, trying to figure out how to say what he had to. Sirius, Remus, and Peter looked down at the floor, all knowing how hard this was going to be for Harry to except much less explain.

"Lord Maul's real name is Jericho of the house of Yorn. The sword that killed Albus was his. He used it and left it behind because he wanted me to know who did it. At first I did not recognize it. But yesterday I watched the fight through Forge's well. I did not see his face but I saw his birthmark on his right hand as well as a Chinese medallion that he had stolen from me. He knew that I would watch to find out how Albus was killed and in doing so see the mark and the medallion and then connect them and the sword to him." Harry said in a dead pan voice.

"Ok but who is Jericho?" Roger Davies asked.

"He's a sorcerer. He is a guy kind of like me. He was quite powerful so he was sent to Forge who trained him with my assistance. Somewhere along the way he went bad and joined a dark army that was marching across central China. Forge and I fought against them to attempt to take Jericho out. His army was defeated and we captured him. He was one of the three I first tested the Blood of Jericho on after I had developed it. That's where it got it's name." Harry went on to explain Jericho's reaction after taking the potion and on to his apparent death.

"How he survived I don't know. But since he could no longer travel through Forge's plane of existence he was stuck in that time period. So he has had nine hundred years for his anger and hatred to grow. However, unlike Voldemort he will not let his hatred towards me get in the way of his ambitions. He will avoid direct confrontations with me and the others at all cost. I believe he killed Albus solely to try and break my spirits and as such give himself an edge. However he will soon find out that that was a big misjudgment on his part. Ever since he has turned his back on the light he has had the typical goal of world domination which adds him to a long list of madmen to have the same ambition. Unfortunately he is a madman that I helped to create." Harry finished sadly. He refused to look anyone in the eye, afraid of what he might see. The fact that he brought this abomination upon them all tore at his very soul and he feared that they would blame him for all that has happened and for what is to come. With many of his friends and 'family' present Harry was a bit surprised that it was Professor Snape that spoke up first.

“Potter you can not blame yourself for everything that goes wrong. You will get nowhere that way. Dumbledore himself gave Voldemort a lot of extra training in dueling and magical combat before he suspected him of opening the Chamber of Secrets.” Snape said with a hint of annoyance.

“Yeah Harry, you couldn’t have known what he would do with the knowledge you and Forge gave him. Forge didn’t and he has been training warriors for so long he can’t remember when he started. So just chalk it up as a bad turn of events, move on and kick his ass.” Luna stated with her voice getting louder as she went. When she was finished many were looking at her a little funny. No one had really heard her raise her voice before. It was like seeing Colin Creevy lose his temper, it just didn’t happen.

“Alright let’s get back on the topic I brought you here for. As I said the four of us will no longer be attending classes. Before I called you here I visited all four house common rooms and added another dorm room right off the common room. I did this because to give the students maximum protection I would like one of the heirs nearby at all times in case something happens. Luna being Ravenclaw’s heir will, of course, stay where she is. As Neville will stay in Gryffindor. As Hufflepuff’s heir Ginny will move to their common room as I will go to Slytherin. There are secret passages connecting all four of these new dorms to serve as an escape route incase of attack and one or more of the common rooms are breached. There is also a passage breaking off from these leading down into the Chamber of Secrets.

When this meeting is finished Ginny, Neville, Luna and I will go through and collapse and seal every secret passage that leads off of school grounds. Before you ask Ron, yes that includes the one to Honeydukes.” Harry added when Ron looked about to protest. “The only one that will remain open is the one I just created leading out from the Chamber of Secrets. It only goes out; you can’t get in through it. We will also have to place the most powerful anti-breaking spells we can think of on every window within this castle, which will take quite awhile. Finally the four of us will have to pull all our power and effort together to strengthen the wards around the school as well as extend them out far enough to cover Hogsmead as well. Any questions so far?” Harry looked around the room to see many dumbfounded faces staring back at him.

“Um, is that all?” Professor Flitwick asked with a hint of sarcasm and amusement in his voice. To this question Harry could only grin.

“No, actually that is not all. I also took the liberty to move a colony of Phoenixes and a small colony of Griffins into the Forbidden Forest for added security in case Lord Maul gets the idea to move large amounts of dark creatures into the forest again.”

“Again?” Nearly everyone asked.

“Yes again. I have reason to believe that it was him not Voldemort that sent the Chimaeras and the Manticore into the forest a few months ago, which also explains how he got his hands on my potion.”

“It does?” Snape asked. “How?”

“Yes it does. And I will be dealing with that problem soon enough. Any more questions?”

“You certainly put a lot of thought into this haven’t you?”

“Yes Hermione I have. Oh I would like you and Professor Flitwick to do a favor for me if you will.” This certainly peeked their curiosity.

“What?” They asked as one.

“I would like the two of you to scour my library and find the most powerful protection spells you can find. I will put a translation charm on the room so you can read even the most obscure of the passages. So are you interested?”

“YES!” They shouted immediately. Harry could not help but laugh as did most everyone else.

“Ok the wards will be down for the two of you only. The password is Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot and Prongs!” Harry said with a grin as most looked at him in shock except Snape who was busy rubbing the bridge of his nose.

“Alright we have to get to work! Ron, you come with me. The three of you start on the secret passages.” And with that said Harry turned on his heel and left the office with a very confused Ron Weasley right behind him.

“Um Harry where are we going?” Ron asked when he noticed Harry was leading him down into the dungeons.

“We have to stop by the armory. Then we are going into the forest.” He answered without looking back.

“Oh, ok.” Ron followed in silence until they entered the armory and Harry turned to him.

“Alright Ron, pick your weapons.” Harry said with a grin on his face. Ron however looked at his best friend in shock.

“Are you insane? I don’t feel like leaving here with a pair of broken arms.” He nearly shouted causing Harry to laugh.

“Ron pick your weapons. If you just grab anything that looks good, yes your arm will be broken. What you have to do is look around at the different blades and you will kind of be drawn to the ones you are meant to have.” Ron listened to Harry’s instructions but still looked very hesitant. “If it makes you feel better to know, Fred and George did this last week.” Ron however was not paying attention. He was already walking slowly around the room inspecting the various weapons.

It took less than a minute for Ron to choose a beautifully crafted cutlass that seemed to suit him rather well, as well as a pair of matching long daggers that rested below it. Harry was about to lead him back out when he noticed that he was still looking. "Ron come on."

"Hold on Harry." Was all he said as he continued to browse. He had quickened his pace a bit until he reached the final wall. Suddenly Ron began to pull several short daggers and throwing knives off the wall as well as a simple leather gauntlet with steel studs across the knuckles.

"Bloody hell!" Was about all Harry could think to say as he watched his friend strap on his numerous weapons. Just to make sure the charm was still in place Harry reached up to grab the sword nearest him. "Ah shit!" He exclaimed as he yanked his arm away to heal the broken bones.

"What the hell happened?" Ron asked as he turned to find out why his friend had cried out.

"Nothing, nothing! You about ready?"

"Yeah. Harry what's so special about this glove. Granted it could do some serious damage but it's not exactly something you would expect to find with all these other weapons." Ron asked as he lifted his right hand so Harry could see it.

"I'm not sure. Maybe that's all it's for. You know, to smash peop....FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!" Harry yelled as he jumped back away from the three eighteen inch blades that shot out from the three steel studs.

"Bloody brilliant!" Was all Ron could think to say as he admired the razor sharp blades.

"Brilliant maybe from your angle! Let's go!" Harry said as he picked himself up off the floor. He watched as Ron walked happily out of the Armory and head back up out of the dungeons. "A god damn walking armory." He sighed as wiped his forehead and followed Ron out.

"Alright so why are we going into the forest?" Ron asked happily as they made their way across the grounds.

"I've got a bone to pick with a Centaur and I wanted you to come in case the others try to interfere. Right now I'm not in the mood to take on a herd all by myself." At this statement Ron stopped dead in his tracks. "What's wrong?"

"You want me to help fight Centaurs? Harry did you see what they did to all those Chimaeras when Voldemort attacked? I won't stand a chance. I don't even really know how to use these." Yep he's panicking, Harry thought.

"For one thing Ron, there probably won't be a fight. Second, yes you do know how to use those. You are the best in the school with those weapons, with certain exceptions of course. Finally the Centaurs caught the Chimaeras by surprise, attacking

from the rear.”

“Are you insane? You only let us practice and train with wooden weapons.” At this statement Harry had no choice but to look at his best friend like he was a complete retard.

“Ron the only difference between those wooden weapons and the ones you’re carrying is that they are quite a bit sharper.”

“OH, ok let’s go!” Ron suddenly stated and walked into the forest, leaving a dumbstruck Harry behind. When he heard Ron begin to laugh, Harry realized he was just pulling his leg.

“I warned you awhile back about that sarcastic sense of humor of yours.” Harry said when he caught up.

“What can I say, I’ve spent too much time around the Marauders.” Ron replied as they walked deeper into the forest. Harry could only grin at his friend. This was the first time since second year that Ron had entered the Forbidden Forest and his reaction was the complete opposite from the last time. It may have been the fact that he was carrying more blades than you would find in most armies or maybe that they were going to see Centaurs and not Acromantula. Whatever the reason, Harry was glad that his friend seemed so relaxed.

Not long after leaving McGonagall’s office, Hermione and Professor Flitwick burst into Gryffindor’s Chamber. Seemingly as one, they both ran for the opposite side of the room to the far wall only to stop and look at it in confusion.

“Um, how did Ginny open this?” Hermione asked as she looked inquiringly at her charms professor.

“I’m not sure Miss Granger. Miss Weasley must have done.... Oh, never mind.” The tiny professor squeaked as the bookshelf in front of them seemed to melt away.

“Where should we start?” Hermione asked as she looked around in awe. They now stood in a room nearly the size of the Hogwarts library but the unnecessary need for enough space for many students to study left a lot of extra space to store information. However you could find very few of these books in Hogwarts or anywhere else for that matter.

“I don’t care! I just need to get one of these into my hands!” Hermione nodded wholeheartedly in agreement and began browsing the many shelves. Without the worry of being attacked by Harry’s wards she and Flitwick were able to take their time gathering many specific books that would help in their assignment, not that they didn’t select other books to see what secrets they held as well.

“Professor, have you ever heard of the Shield of Light?” Hermione asked after some time. Professor Flitwick for his part seemed startled at this question.

(The Shield of Light is not my idea. I got it from Dragon Phoenix’s Harry Potter

and the Order of Light, which I recommend that you read.)

“The Shield of Light?” He yelled.

“Yes, I found it right here but it only has the incantation. It doesn’t give any other information on the spell.” She explained, being a little confused and intrigued by the professor’s reaction, as she pushed the massive tomb across the table.

“My god!” He muttered as he looked over the page.

“Professor what is the Shield of Light?”

“To be honest Miss Granger, I believed it to be only a myth. If Mr. Potter wants protection spells than this is the manifestation of everything he’s looking for. With the exception of its obvious set backs it is the most powerful protection spell ever created. But this should only be used as a last resort.” Flitwick said in awe as he stared at the pages.

“Why? Why only a last resort if it is so powerful?”

“Because my dear, according to legend, it gathers its power from the caster. While the shield is in place nothing can harm the person, object or location, it would continuously gather strength from Mr. Potter. The only way for the shield to come down would be if he released it or if he were completely drained of energy. If which case he would be killed. So I guess we have no recourse but to continue our search.” He finished cheerfully, which earned a grin from Hermione.

“What a pity!” She replied unconvincingly as she ran to retrieve another stack of books.

‘Harry, what are you and Ron doing right now?’ Ginny’s voice suddenly sounded in Harry’s head.

‘Well we are in the forest right now. We were on our way to speak with the Centaurs but got held up. At the moment Ron has his hands full with a Quintaped. I, on the other hand, am sipping on a nice cold soda and amusing myself with a box of Every Flavor Beans. Did you know that there is a dog drool flavored bean?’ Harry replied with a grin on his face.

‘A Quintaped? You mean a Hairy McBoon? What the hell is one doing in the forest? I thought they were all on the Isle of Drear? And why the hell are you letting fight it by himself, those thing are vicious?’ She demanded.

“I am letting Ron fight it so he can get some practical experience. And they are all still on the Isle of Drear. This one is merely an illusion. A very realistic one!” Harry paused a moment before continuing. “So what was it that you wanted?”

“Oh I was just going to ask if you could take care of the secret passage that leads to the Shrieking Shack. Neville and Luna have decided to go over and seal the passages that have already collapsed as well just in case and I have started on sealing

the windows so it may take us awhile to get to it.”

“Yeah I’ll take care of it. We’ll see you in a little while.” Harry finished as he walked towards a panting Ron who was standing over the body of a very odd creature. It stood three feet off the ground on its five legs. Its entire body was covered with a thick, coarse brown hair. Despite his obvious victory over the large and nasty creature, Ron was not happy.

“You son of a bitch! What the hell were you doing eating a snack while that thing was trying to kill me?”

“He was not trying to kill you Ron!” Harry said calmly.

“Sure fooled me. What was it doing then, trying to make friends?” Ron had really worked himself up and his Weasley temper was beginning to show. Lucky for Harry his temper was nothing compared to Ginny’s.

“Actually he was trying to eat you. Weather you were dead or alive made no difference to him. Quintapedes have a deep love for human flesh.” Ron just stood looking at his friend in absolute horror. His fears while fighting the Quintaped were for the most part due to its resemblance, in appearance and movements, to spiders which he is deeply terrified of.

“Eat me?” He stuttered as Harry led him away. Harry decided not to tell him that it was only an illusion because Ron would then look at this experience as a waste of both his energy and emotions when he should look at it as a learning experience. Harry wanted to help his friend to get over his fears of spiders and he felt putting him against a spider like creature was a good start. Harry however was pulled out of these thoughts when he heard Ron yelp from beside him. Turning towards him Harry noticed that all color seemed to have drained from his face.

“Ron what’s wrong?” Ron’s only answer was to point directly ahead of them. Looking up Harry saw what had frightened his friend and had to stifle a laugh. “Ron, this is Courage!” He said as he pointed at the large griffin that stood proudly opposite them.

‘It is agreeable to see you again master!’ Courage roared as Harry grimaced at the title.

‘Why do have to call me that?’ He sighed.

‘As Godric’s heir, you are my master now. Besides, it annoys you.’ The winged lion finished with what looked disturbingly like a grin.

‘I was almost sure that was the reason! “Well, Courage this is Ron Weasley from the line of Hufflepuff.” Harry made this last statement in English for Ron’s benefit.

“Hello.” Was all Ron managed to say but Harry was pleased to note that the color had returned to his face. Courage inclined his head at Ron’s greeting.

‘Ah, young Ginny’s youngest brother. From what I heard of your conversation before it would seem that Helga’s temper breeds true even today.’ As Harry laughed at this comment Courage’s demeanor grew suddenly colder. ‘The centaur you are seeking is with his herd just passed that grove behind me. I hope you have decided on some fitting chastisement for one with so little honor.’

‘That I have. And I must go see to that now. Where have you and your brethren settled.’

‘We have settled deep into the forest east of Hogwarts. The Phoenix and unicorns are nearby so keeping contact and passing information will be of no difficulty. I must return now. You must come by soon, the young ones have been asking about you. Bring your mate as well.’ Courage finished with a laugh as he bounded back into the trees leaving Harry staring stupidly behind. Harry was really getting tired of everyone cracking jokes about his friendship with Ginny. He was definitely going to have to do something about that soon.

“Harry what were you talking about?” Harry nearly jumped out of his skin at the sound of Ron’s voice. “Woe calm down it’s just me! Now what did he say?” Ron asked as they began to walk.

“Oh he said that the centaurs are over there. And that I should ‘chastise’ one in particular. Which I planned to do anyway.” Harry replied stiffly. Harry’s anger at the moment puzzled Ron especially since it seemed to be directed at the centaurs. Or more specifically one centaur. After just a few minutes more, they came to the grove where the centaurs were gathered.

“Ok, which one?” Harry ignored Ron’s question as he surveyed the herd before them. It took only a moment before they were spotted by the herd and four familiars cantered up to them. Firenze and Ronan were the first to arrive but were just a little put out when Harry ignored their greetings and continued to stare, or more accurately, glare at the others that were approaching.

“Harry Potter, it is pleasing to find you in good health!” Magorian greeted as he and Bane approached. Harry however continued to ignore all efforts at polite conversation as he bore holes into Bane. Bane’s three companions were bewildered at the unveiled animosity and hatred in Harry’s eyes. But what truly shocked them was the guilty look on their friends face.

“You know why I’m here, don’t you Bane?” Harry nearly growled. Bane hung his head and nodded confusing everyone as to what he had done.

“Do you know what it was that you stole?” The calm manner in which Harry had asked this question caused a shiver to run through the entire herd that was hanging onto every word spoken.

“No, I do not!” Bane replied truthfully.

“Well I will tell you what it was. It is called Blood of Jericho. You, being the one who stole it; I’m sure you can understand the name. What it does is take complete

control away from the poor bastard that is forced to drink it and gives it to another. Since you don't read wizard news papers I will explain something to you Bane. Lord Maul sent thoughts Chimaeras and the Manticore into the forest to drive everything else out. They attacked and killed many in your herd. By luck, I stumbled upon you and was able to save the vast majority of those that were injured. Are you following so far?" Bane could not seem to even look at Harry much less look him in the eye.

"Yes I am." He choked out as tears were falling freely down his cheeks. Everyone was watching in morbid fascination and were wondering 'exactly' where this was going.

"Good I'm glad to see your mind is still working." This comment brought on many protests and angered words but Magorian quickly silenced them. "While your herd was healing I went off in search of your attackers and with a bit of help gave those creatures exactly what they deserved. Of course while I was gone and Professors Snape and Dumbledore were engrossed in a book you felt free to steal what is probably one of the most dangerous potions ever created and then give it to the very man that had your herd attacked." When Bane denied nothing voices again began to call out only this time they were directed at Bane. "Now Bane why would you do that?" Bane seemed to stumble over his words for several minutes before he was able to get out a coherent sentence.

"I had to protect my herd!" He replied quietly.

"So after the attack and I showed up, you were threatened, with the destruction of your herd, into stealing that particular potion?" Bane merely nodded. "After the first and only attack there were still nearly one hundred healthy Centaurs and there were only five of them. We know you can fight. You wiped out nearly one hundred Chimaeras on the Hogwarts grounds. So why were you terrified of only four and one Manticore?"

I will tell you why you were scared. It was because Lord Maul has the uncanny, if not overrated ability to render someone so terrified that they think they have no choice but to do as he says. I do not believe that you did this because you bore me or any human ill will but that you were honestly thinking of the best for your herd and in return I bare you no ill will because I no why you did it. The creatures of the light, whether they be human, centaur, unicorn, griffin or phoenix, are more concerned with the safety and well being of ours as a whole than we are with ourselves and that is what Lord Maul feeds on. Many of his followers are people like these. People that are afraid to not obey him out of fear for their loved ones. Which brings me to the primary reason I am here." Harry paced for a few minutes and tried to get his breathing, which had suddenly quickened, under control.

"Just a couple of days ago, on Halloween, an attack was launched on Diagon Alley." A sudden collective gasp seemed to echo across the grove. "Sixty three people were killed and another two hundred wounded. Those who attacked are known as 'followers', which means that they do not follow Lord Maul willingly. Like Bane they were instilled with an unbearable fear for their loved ones, which for them is all the more real because they are being held prisoner. Myself, Ginny Weasley, Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood fought for sometime before we realized that the

attack was only a diversion. The real attack was on Hogwarts. While we were gone sixteen students and four professors were killed.” Harry waved off many questions and had to take several deep breaths before he could utter the words he had been trying to deny.

“Four professors, and Headmaster Dumbledore were killed!” Silence followed these words. Centaurs had roughly the same life span as muggles so there were not very many among them that had been around before Dumbledore had come to Hogwarts. Among the centaurs Dumbledore was held in very high regard, even though he was a human.

“Then Minerva McGonagall is now in charge of Hogwarts?” Firenze asked sadly after several minutes of silence.

“Yes as far as academic and disciplinary matters go. I have been given the responsibility of protecting the school. We will be extending the protective wards so that they cover Hogsmead and most of the forest as well. The other heirs and I will not be taking classes anymore so we can focus solely on Lord Maul and let Minerva and the other professors try and prepare the students as much as they can.”

“Mr. Potter how is it that Lord Maul was able to affect Bane, one of the bravest of our number, in such an extreme fashion.” Magorian asked as he glanced sideways at his companion. He clearly did not believe Harry’s assessment of what had happened.

“Well its just something you could be born with. Its difficult to explain. I could show you if you would like?” Harry offered after a minute. Magorian and Ronan looked between the two of them before nodding. Firenze wasn’t having any of it and Bane had no intention of feeling it again.

Magorian and Ronan looked back to Harry. He looked no different than he did moments before and yet there was still something different. Something in his eyes. Something....terrifying.

It was not long before the two stargazing warriors were on the ground with their arms wrapped around their heads begging for Harry to stop. Ron and the rest of the herd looked on in shock as two of their leaders cowered. No one could see any difference with Harry but there was clearly something that was different. It was mere moments but it seemed like a lifetime before Magorian and Ronan stood back up shaking slightly with ashen faces.

“I’m sorry, I should not have done that.” Harry said sincerely. “But I could not leave while you still doubted Bane’s loyalty.” He made this comment looking at the still shaky Magorian. “I must ask a favor but I ask only this. If you happen to notice any movements of dark creatures or large groups of wizards within this forest would you please pass that information on to the griffins or phoenixes who will pass it on to me. They will also be able to find me if you need to see me.”

“Griffins? I thought I saw one earlier but there hasn’t been any in the forest for centuries.” Ronan commented. The centaurs were deeply surprised that there were

griffins in the forest once again.

“Yes that was Courage, a former companion of Godric Gryffindor. He and a number of others have settled in the eastern part of the forest near the unicorns. A colony of phoenixes is nearby as well. Right now I am trying to fortify the school as much as possible without drawing too much attention, if any, to the changes. Alright well that is about it. I just wanted to come by and run everything by you.” Seeing that Bane still looked extremely ashamed Harry turned back towards him.

“Bane would you please follow me, I have a favor to ask?” Bane, feeling a great sense of obligation to Harry followed immediately. Harry, Ron and Bane walked in silence for several minutes before Harry began.

“Ok Bane, I understand that centaurs are very skilled at the concealment of themselves and their sacred sights?” Harry of course knew this to be true and how to do it but he felt that Bane needed something to do that could possibly make a big difference before he could start to regain some of the self respect he had lost when he weakened to Lord Maul.

“Yes, we use many different forms and techniques to hide from muggles and to a certain extent wizards as well.” Bane said quietly but his confusion showed in his voice.

“Oh thank god!” Harry said, maybe a little over done but it served its purpose. “Right now all the secret passages leading out of the castle are being demolished and sealed. Save one that is to be used as a last resort. I know a lot of concealment charms but I’m not very good with them. I’m very good at muggle concealment techniques but they would do no good if someone used magic against it so I was wondering if you could help me out?” Bane looked at Harry eagerly and gratefully before nodding.

“Ok what are we trying to conceal?”

“This tree stump!” Harry said as he kicked the stump in front of him. Due to the force of the kick, the stump flipped up like the cap to some condiment bottle revealing a hole leading down, deep into the ground with a ladder running the length. “I have placed a security dome at a fifty yard radius from this spot so students coming out won’t be seen or heard until someone can come for them.” Harry and Ron walked off a ways while Bane worked because it was forbidden to show anyone their ways.

“Alright Harry what was that crap about not being able to conceal a tree stump?” Ron asked Harry when they were out of earshot from Bane. Harry looked at him bewildered for a moment but clearly Ron wasn’t buying it.

“It’s simple really. He and his mind fell prey to Lord Maul. Even though I and his herd know how and why it happened he still blames himself. Bane is a Centaur which means that he has a very high opinion of himself and that image was tarnished. He needed something to do that would in some way make him feel that he was helping the light more than his misguidance helped the dark and what better way is there then to ensure the safety and integrity of the only escape route for the students of Hogwarts.” Ron stared at his friend with utter amazement in his eyes.

“Everyone has to feel good about themselves for something.” Harry finished as he turned to head back to speak with Bane for a moment before heading back to the castle. As Ron watched his Friend walk away he couldn’t help but smile and think of what he could have done to deserve a good friend like Harry.

Chapter Twenty Two: Preparing For War

Ron walked out of the Forbidden Forest, at Harry’s side, with Harry’s words echoing inside his head. ‘Everyone has to feel good about something’, he had said. He couldn’t help but think of the look of extreme shame and self loathing in Bane’s eyes earlier. But those emotions were replaced with pride and, to some extent, happiness when Harry praised the efforts and spectacular results when he had finished concealing the exit to the escape route leading out of Hogwarts. Harry had a strong ability to tear someone down quite effectively, but he could also build them back up, stronger than they were before.

“What are you thinking about mate? Are you alright?” Looking to his side Ron saw the inquiring eyes of his friend.

“Yeah I’m fine, why?” Ron’s confused expression became even more so when Harry began laughing almost hysterically. Ron, who never really acted well when on the receiving end of a joke, began to get annoyed. Not only was he being laughed at but he also had no idea why.

“What’s so funny then?” His hot response only served to amuse Harry further.

“Ron, you haven’t said a word since we left Bane. You ignored my attempts at conversation on the way out of the forest and I just blew up a tunnel and you still had that same dazed look about you when you are thinking about doing things with Hermione. So I repeat, what were you thinking about?” Harry had to give a short chuckle when Ron looked at him with a sheepish grin of embarrassment.

“Actually I was thinking about you!” When Harry gave him a sharp look he continued. “No, not like that you dirty git. Those thoughts are reserved strictly for Hermione. What I was thinking about really was how much you had changed. Before you would probably have blasted Bane pretty good. But instead you forgave him. And then to show that that forgiveness and trust was sincere you asked his help with something that was pretty important. So instead of having an enemy or even just an ally, you’ve made Bane a friend. I don’t think I would be able to forgive that easy, much less make him feel good about himself again.” Ron said as Harry listened silently.

“We all have our talents Ron. I am good at the here and now, and to a certain extent preparing for the future. Your primary strength is anticipating your opponent’s actions and preparing accordingly. We all know what our strengths and weaknesses are. What we must decide is when to use which because our weaknesses can also be strengths in the fact that a strategic enemy will not expect us to act with those qualities.”

“Ok. I didn’t expect a speech as a response but I can see your point. So what do we do now?” Ron asked after a few moments to ponder Harry’s words.

“Right now I have to help Ginny finish up sealing the windows with unbreakable charms then get some rest. Extending the school wards is going to take an awful lot of energy and I don’t feel like passing out before we’re finished.” Ron nodded his head in understanding before a wicked grin spread across his face.

“Speaking of Ginny, when do you plan on asking her out?” Ron was a little surprised when Harry did not get angry or even annoyed by this question. Instead he had a deeply hurt look on his face.

“That was the last thing Albus told me to do before I sent him up to his quarters to die in private.” Ron could think of nothing to say to this. He just stood where he was and sadly watched as his friend walked back to the school alone.

Ron did not see Harry again for the rest of the day, or Hermione either for that matter, and he was starting to get worried. He had no doubt in his mind where Hermione was but Harry was a different story. Apparently no one else had seen him either and when he did not show up for dinner he decided to ask Neville when they got back to the common room.

“Hey Neville have you seen Harry?” Ron asked as he spotted him talking to a distraught looking Dean Thomas in the corner of the common room. Looking up Neville saw the urgency and worry in Ron’s face and sighed.

“No I haven’t! Apparently after he finished sealing the windows he went to his dorm in the Slytherin common room. He let us know where ours were before he finished.” After thinking for a moment he came up with an idea. It was a rather simple one but an idea nonetheless. “Let’s go see if he’s there! Dean, I’ll be right back alright.” Dean merely nodded his head in response as Neville led Ron to the back of the common room where they usually sat to do homework.

“We’re going to go through the passages connecting our rooms because I don’t really feel like being surrounded by Slytherins right now.” Ron agreed wholeheartedly with Neville’s idea, he had no desire to see Malfoy at all. He watched as Neville placed his hand on the wall and suddenly a small archway, much like the portrait hole which served as the entrance to Gryffindor Tower, opened up for the two friends to enter.

Following Neville inside Ron could only gasp in wonder. The room was easily the same size as his dorm room, which was impressive considering this room had only one occupant. Just off the far wall was a massive king sized four poster bed much like the one Neville previously slept in. A large fireplace was burning happily in the opposite wall with a nice red plush couch and two tall backed arm chairs facing it. The walls were completely bare with the exception of a large muggle painting of some great battle. Ron was engrossed in the painting, taking in every detail when Neville spoke up.

“That was the battle where King Arthur Pendragon faced the vast armies of

Maudrid. I haven't been in here yet so I haven't had time to decorate. Well we better get going." Ron nodded as once again his friend placed his hand on one of the walls to reveal yet another opening. "This passage is supposed to lead only to the other common rooms and the chamber of secrets so we shouldn't have too much trouble finding Harry's room."

Ron and Neville walked through the semi dark passage in silence.

"So what was wrong with Dean?" Ron asked. Neville quickly turned his head to look at Ron as if he were the stupidest creature alive.

"Ron his best friend died just a few days ago. Have you just forgotten the last three days?" He asked stiffly. Ron just stopped and stared down at his feet. "Sorry Ron, I didn't mean to sound so..." Neville stopped when Ron raised his hand.

"No Neville. There is no need to apologize. I don't know, every time I hear someone discussing those who died I just sort of shut down. It's like I go into my own little world where none of this happened and everyone is ok. I didn't even go to the memorial service. I just stayed in my bed like it was just another day where I could sleep in." Ron took a few deep breaths then looked up ahead of him. "Let's just go."

"For just connecting the common rooms there sure are a lot of passages. This is almost as bad as finding your way through Hogwarts as a first year." Neville said in an annoyed tone of voice twenty minutes after they left his room.

"Neville did you hear Harry say that they just connected the common rooms, because I sure didn't." Ron commented wryly just before he came to a sudden stop. "Do you think this is it?" He asked as he pointed to the wall on his left side that had a large snake engraved into it.

"It's either Harry's room or the way into the Chamber of Secrets." Neville said as he placed his hand on the wall in front of him. Just as it had done in the Gryffindor common room the wall silently formed up into an archway leading into the beautiful room beyond. Its layout was much like Neville's only this was done up with a combination of Slytherin and Gryffindor colors as well as a royal blue. Above Harry's fireplace was a large painting of Slytherin as well as Gryffindor and Merlin. All three were holding their respective weapons and looked prepared to go into battle. Unknown to both Ron and Neville, this portrait mirrored the scene just before Salazar Slytherin dispensed justice to Lord Voldemort.

A slight muffled sound drew their attention away from painting and towards the couch sitting a few feet away. The scene that met their eyes was the last thing they would have expected to see.

Harry was sitting on the couch with Ginny. They would have been happy at having found their friends in such a way but then the reality of the scene hit them. They were sitting in a close embrace and Harry was holding on to her tightly as he sobbed into her shoulder. Ginny for her part was holding Harry just as tightly and rubbing his back whispering encouraging words into his ear. It took them several moments to realize that as this was going on Ginny's eyes were locked on them.

In those eyes was a deep pain for what Harry was feeling but also a warning for their two spectators. The look in her eyes clearly spoke the words, 'get out and don't speak of this,' and Neville and Ron quickly and silently left the room, giving Harry and Ginny the privacy they both needed.

"The only time I have seen him even close to crying like that was the night of the third task during fourth year but he was able to prevent from crying even then. I don't even know if he cried when we thought Sirius was dead." Ron said quietly after the archway had disappeared and only a solid wall remained. Neville could do nothing but agree.

"I have known him for a long time and seen him go through many hard times but never once have I seen him like that." Neville said with a mixture of sadness and confusion in his voice.

"I guess everything he has been through as finally become too overwhelming to hold all of his pain in. Who knows, maybe it will do him some good. Exactly how old is Harry?" Ron asked after a moment of silence. It had become almost a game among those in the D.A. and the Order to see if they could guess his exact age, there were even many bets made but Harry would say nothing about the subject.

"I don't know. I'm not sure any of us do. Whenever anyone asks him he changes the subject very quickly with a bit of a warning not to bring it up again. Actually none of us, other than Harry, really knows how old any of the rest of us are either. We like to keep that to ourselves. We could leave at the same time and go to different locations and time periods to study and get back at the same time but we could have been gone for completely different lengths of time. But I would advise against asking Ginny for even a ballpark number. One night Harry let it slip to Albus so naturally Dumbledore had to tease her a bit. THAT, did not end well, for him or for Harry!" Ron nodded in agreement as he continued down the dark passage, attempting to find Neville's room again.

/Four hours earlier/

Harry walked quietly into the school intent on finishing what needed to be done then going directly to bed. Using wandless magic with some help from Merlin's staff, which he had summoned, he quickly finished the first two floors within a few hours and began making his way up to the third.

"Harry, why didn't you let anyone know you were back?" Harry turned to see Ginny walking up the corridor behind him.

"I guess I didn't want anyone to know." He replied absently as he quickly sealed an unused classroom. Ginny looked at him strangely as he turned and began walking back down a corridor that led nowhere and had no classroom or even an old broom closet.

"Harry, where are you going?" She asked in a confused tone as she slowly followed him.

"I'm going to get some sleep." Harry as he placed his right hand on the blank wall. Ginny watched closely as an archway appeared seemingly out of nowhere leading in to a dark passage. Harry didn't even spare her a second glance as he entered and the arch closed behind him. Ginny wasted little time before she opened the wall herself and decided to follow Harry.

It took a few moments but soon she was able to pick up his current direction and began to catch up. It took her only moments to realize that Harry had obviously connected more than just the common rooms with these hidden passages, seeing markings on the walls apparently indicating a specific room or corridor. Thinking about it, she should have known that would be the case. Usually when Harry did something he went all out and made it worth the effort.

After several twists, turns, flights of steps and secret passages with the secret passage Ginny came to the spot where Harry had obviously left the passages since this was where Harry's trail of magical aura ended. Looking around she found a large coiled serpent engraved into the wall to her right. Placing her hand on the wall, as she had done to get into the passage in the first place, Ginny stepped into the room beyond the archway.

She paid no attention to the furnishings around her, only the man sitting across the room. Harry was sitting at a small table with the fire light dancing across his downcast face. He seemed not to see her as he drank down a glass of Old Ogden's Fire Whiskey with the half empty bottle resting on the table before him.

"So, it's going to be another one of those days is it?" Ginny said coldly as she made her way across the room, Harry simple ignored her and kept his head down. "You ignore your feelings and all your pain until it all seems too much for you, then you drink yourself into a stupor." She finished when she stopped in front of him.

"Ginny just leave!" Harry slurred as he poured another drink.

"Not this time." Ginny stated as she grabbed the bottle from Harry's hand and through it into the wall. Harry looked up towards Ginny intending to lash out at her but as their eyes met his face instantly paled.

Her eyes looked to be dark bottomless pits, which anyone that knew her could tell you that she was really pissed off. Her posture was stiff and ridged as she stood before him with her arms crossed across her chest while glaring down at him with those intense eyes.

The moment brilliant green eyes met dark chocolate brown Harry was bombarded with images from his past. From the abusive treatment of the Dursley's to blood stained battlefields and friends long since gone. His mind was awash with grief, anger and regret. But just as suddenly as it had started it quickly ended.

Harry looked up at her with wide, almost horrified, eyes as her's returned to their normal soft appearance. Ginny sat down across the table from him and looked on his appearance in sadness. She noticed unshed tears building in his eyes yet she knew

they would not fall, not yet.

“Harry if you ever want to be happy you are going to have to face your pain instead of run from it. It will do you no good to hide from bitter and horrible memories behind booze and memory charms.” Harry’s eyes widened once more. “Didn’t think I knew about that did you? So tell me, when the charms don’t work any more are you going to follow in Forge’s footsteps and create your own little world? Stick your head out of your hole only when it suits you?” She said in a manner that made Harry think of a mother berating her children for getting in trouble at school.

“I have no doubt that your experiences have been darker and more stressful than the rest of us. I also know that the fact that you have had to kill others has been harder on you than us due to your past. But ignoring your problems will not make them go away.” She would have continued but Harry then spoke up in a soft, almost inaudible voice.

“You don’t get it Ginny! I’m tired! Do you understand? I’m tired! I have had enough of this world and the evils that plague it. In reality I am now well over three thousand years old and for more than half that every time I have gone into a fight or battle I have prayed that I don’t come out alive. The human spirit was never meant to be in this world that long. But I keep going, keep surviving.” It took Ginny a bit of effort to hide her shock at the fact that Harry had actually spoke of his age and even more at the admission that he longed for death which brought a great pain to her heart. “And we still have many battles left to fight and if we come out on top then I must remain here for perhaps another thousand years or more. If we lose than this world will know suffering the likes of which god has never seen. And yet I am still tempted almost every day to end my own suffering by pushing it off onto all those around me.” Ginny stood there with tears rolling down her cheeks as Harry looked up at her with hollow, almost lifeless eyes. Devoid of everything except pain. Standing up he made his way over to the fire and poked it several times with the poker then sat down on the couch with his arms resting on his knees and his eyes turned to the floor.

“Obviously you came here to see what was wrong with me. Judging by your reaction, this was clearly not what you were expecting to hear. The hardest part with this is that as the years have gone by I have found fewer and fewer reasons to keep going. My life has been one fight after another, weather it is because I wanted to help someone or someone else wanted me dead. It is not difficult for me to kill because of my past as you think. It is of the fact that many of those I have killed died needlessly. They did not fight because of any ideals of theirs or mine; they fought because someone else told them to. Because that person wanted to make a name for himself by my death. And they all failed.” They sat in silence for nearly ten minutes as Harry took several deep breaths, obviously trying to work up the courage to continue. And Ginny tried to hold back the tears as she was close to losing it completely.

“About two weeks ago Albus and I had a conversation much like this one. He gave me several reasons to live. He mentioned Ron and Hermione, Luna and Neville, the three Marauders, the rest of the Weasley’s and many others. But he left something out. I think he did it on purpose to make me think about it but that is only a theory.” Harry still had his eyes locked on the floor and had no idea if Ginny was still listening or even still in the room which helped him to continue. “The only reason I have been

able to think of to continue with this life has been you.” Harry admitted as he shut his eyes tight to hold back the waves of emotion that was sweeping over him at that moment. Ginny stood in absolute shock for several moments before she could even think of a reply.

“Wh, what?” Was all she could manage to choke out.

“Ginny, I, I love you.” Harry stammered as a lone tear made its way down his red cheek. Ginny was so completely shocked that that she did not realize that she had been holding her breath until her head started spinning and she began seeing spots in front of her eyes. After taking several quick breaths and blinking furiously she looked back towards the couch to realize that Harry was now weeping freely. She made her way slowly to the couch where she sat at Harry’s side and gently began to caress his back. When he flinched away slightly from the contact Ginny grabbed him by the shoulders and pulled him into a strong embrace. Harry was very tense for a few moments before relaxing and hugging Ginny in return. There they sat for what seemed like an eternity before Ginny’s attention was drawn towards two figures that had just entered the room through the wall she was facing.

Ron and Neville were standing just inside of the archway looking at the painting above the fireplace in fascination. Their attention was suddenly drawn to the couch however and Ginny’s eyes hardened. Both Neville and Ron had excited if not mischievous looks on their faces for a moment but it soon turned to confusion and shock when they realized what was going on. At any other moment Ginny might have smiled when they noticed she was watching them. One look into her eyes and the two instantly paled several shades lighter and quickly backed out of the room. And Ginny went back to trying to sooth Harry whose exhaustion from recent events seemed to be catching up to him.

Harry’s mind was racing now and he found it harder and harder to control his emotions. He had actually just spilled his thoughts and feelings to the one person he had tried to hide them from the most. He had told her his thoughts of the world, life and about her. He had told her the one thing he had never said to anyone else before with any meaning. It had been only recently that he would actually admit to himself much less anyone else that he loved Ginny.

The moment the words left his lips it seemed the world was pushing in on him and every painful memory he had ever experienced was pushed to the forefront. It was much like the effects of a Dementors presence but also different. It was more like an emotional cleansing. Every pain he had denied, every emotion he had suppressed was being let out after centuries of building inside of him to the point of complete mental breakdown.

After a few moments he felt someone gently rubbing his back and instinctively tried to move away. His efforts were ineffective however as Ginny pulled him into a tight embrace which he began to return moments later. He could not make out the words that she was whispering but the sound of her voice seemed to help take his worries away. He had no idea how long he was sitting there but soon he was growing tired and soon all he saw was black as he drifted into perhaps the first truly restful sleep he had ever had.

'Harry get up to McGonagall's office, we have a problem!' Neville's voice sounded loudly in Harry's head the next morning. Harry who was still sleeping soundly on the couch in his room, instantly jumped to his feet. The only problem was that he was now standing on the couch with blurry eyes and a massive rush of blood to the head. This did not serve well as he tried to step back and tripped on the back of the couch, sending him falling backwards and landing hard on the stone floor.

So there he was staring up at the ceiling with stars dancing before his eyes and Ginny laughing down at him. 'Wait, Ginny?' Harry thought to himself. Then the memories of the night before all came back.

"Oh god!" He moaned as he rubbed his face with both hands in a futile attempt to convince himself that it was all simply a dream. Ginny who had guessed his current state of mind quickly put a stop to it.

"Forget it Harry, we can talk later. First lets see what Neville thinks is so important." She said firmly as she helped him up and they both disappeared.

Neville was now standing in Professor McGonagall's office where the Headmistress was in a heated argument with an irate Narcissa Malfoy.

"I demand to see Mr. Potter this instant." Mrs. Malfoy nearly screamed but McGonagall was not going to take any attitude from the woman.

"And I have already told you that we do not know where he is at the moment and even if we did I have no control over him what so ever so I can't very well force him to see you." She shot back at the woman with as much venom as she was receiving. Neville who was standing off to the side began rubbing his temples as the two continued their argument. He of course knew where Harry was but the warning in Ginny's eyes prevented him from speaking of it. After several moments he was greatly relieved when Harry and Ginny appeared in the room right behind the two bickering ladies.

"What the hell is going on?" Harry asked Neville quietly as he watched in a strange sort of fascination. He of course had seen McGonagall lose her temper before but every time that he had seen Narcissa Malfoy she had seemed to be the very soul aristocratic composure. So much that she seemed oblivious to all that around her.

"Well Mrs. Malfoy came here looking to speak to you about something but since no one knew where you were she became very irritable." Neville whispered back.

"Cool." Harry said as he sat down and continued to watch. When Neville and Ginny took up the seats on either side of them a certain smell caught their attention. Looking over their thoughts were confirmed when they saw a bowl of popcorn resting on Harry's lap. Ginny simply rolled her eyes.

"Moron. You spend entirely too much time around Sirius!" Harry simply grinned before he went back to enjoying the 'show'.

“.....until he walks through that door I will...” McGonagall was cut off as she pointed to the door and saw the three spectators. Following her gaze Mrs. Malfoy was also shocked into silence.

“Oh, please don’t mind me? By all means continue, I can wait.” Harry said in an amused tone as he ate some of his popcorn. This served to snap the two women out of their comatose like state.

“Mr. Potter what are you doing here?”

“I was asked to come. And from what I heard of that fascinating display of the English language, I was wanted as well.” Harry said as he stood up and sat his snack down. Both women blushed a bit at the mention of some of their more colorful statements.

“Yes well. Yes Mrs. Malfoy here desires a word with you!” McGonagall said simply as she composed herself and sat down behind her desk. Harry looked towards Malfoy with questioning eyes.

“Yes I would like to speak with you but in private if you please?” She said as she looked at everyone else in the room. Harry nodded before grabbing her arm and transporting both back to his room.

When they arrived Mrs. Malfoy was breathing hard with her eyes open wide in shock. When she regained her senses she looked around in confusion.

“Where are we?”

“My quarters. Now I’m guessing that this is not a social call.” Harry said as he sat in one of the high backed chairs in front of the fire.

“No it’s not. I came to speak about my husband.” She replied as she took the chair opposite him. She tried to read his very thoughts through his facial expressions and his eyes but came up with nothing. There was nothing there that even gave a hint about Lucius but there was also no ignorance. Harry noticed her searching expression and silently approved. He would expect nothing less from a member of the Black family. Especially one that married into the Malfoys.

“And what would you like to discuss that pertains to him?” He asked after a moments thought.

“The answer to that is simple. I would like to know if you know weather he is alive or not. And if he is still alive, I would like that remedied as soon as possible.” Now that Harry was not expecting.

“Mrs. Malfoy, despite what my abilities might say, I am not a contract killer. If I meet him in a fight I will have no problem putting him down. But you are going to have to give me a pretty good reason to go out of my way to do it.” Harry stated coolly. To be honest he had no problem going out of his way to do it either but he wanted to know the reasons.

“I can give you the place of the next major attack. I probably won’t know it until just before it begins but Lucius will get word to me before hand, just like he did before they attacked Hogwarts. I had just enough time to warn Dumbledore before they got there. And I can warn you before the next one.” If she was expecting to get some kind of reaction out of Harry from this offer she was in for a disappointment. As intriguing as this offer was Harry wanted something else because he knew he would get that information from her anyway.

“I didn’t ask you for what I would get in return. I want a reason ‘why’ I should.” This time Harry had a little longer to wait for his answer. Mrs. Malfoy looked torn between telling him her reasons and keeping them to herself. But she soon decided.

“I have two reasons. The first is my son. He looks up to his father as if he is a hero that the rest of the wizarding world should look up to and admire. He has been raised in his father’s beliefs and I prey that with his death Draco will, in time, see the futility in such ideas.

The second is rather complicated. Both the Black and Malfoy families have very dark histories. Growing up I was a good deal like my cousin Sirius. The only difference was that I kept my hatred and contempt for my family to myself. My chance to get away from them was taken away from me when my father decided that he would choose my husband. My illusions that maybe Lucius wouldn’t be as bad as his family died when he raped me on our wedding night.

Since then I have been feeding Dumbledore information when I could and dealing with other matters myself when opportunities presented themselves. Many members of the Blacks and Malfoys have died at my hands. Weather it be poison or smothering my aunt in her sleep. I hear her portrait still shrieks and yells at that disgusting house. Every dark witch or wizard within the Black family is now dead. And Lucius is the only one left of the Malfoys. He will not return to our home nor will he tell me where he is so as you can see I can not kill him myself. Right now I think I can move Draco away from his current path, but if I can’t and he joins his father, I will have no problem ending the Malfoy line forever. I would rather not resort to that but like I said as long as Lucius is alive Draco ‘will’ follow him.” When she was finished she looked into Harry’s eyes and found them exactly like they were when she started. ‘This boy is good.’ She thought, clearly impressed. After a moment of silence she began to get nervous. “You don’t believe me?” It was more of a statement rather than a question but despite her efforts her disappointment showed in her voice.

“No!” She lowered her head and sighed in defeat. “I do believe you.” When her head shot back up Harry continued. “The way you treated Peter while he was locked up in your husband’s dungeons shows some of your sincerity and it also explains why you did not inform Dumbledore of his whereabouts. The fact that your family, Voldemort and the Death Eater pretending to be him were the only ones that knew of his imprisonment prevented it. After all how would that information get out unless one of you slipped up. Besides I have a pretty strong truth charm in this room, which did me a great disservice last night.” He muttered this last part almost inaudibly but Mrs. Malfoy heard him and wondered what he meant. “Anyway those are both good

enough reasons so I'll go ahead and give you my deepest condolences and regrets in advance just in case I happen across your wayward husband." Harry finished with mocking regret. Harry was very amused to see an almost childlike excitement brighten her eyes and she suddenly gave him a warm hug and a kiss on the cheek.

Stepping back and looking around her she became confused. "Um, how do I get out of here? No offence but being dragged through the Hogwarts wards is a little disconcerting." She asked when she realized that there were no doors.

"Uh, oh well you can either go that way through the Slytherin common room or that way through the secret passages." Harry said pointing to opposite sides of the room.

"Oh, going through the common room would probably not be a good idea right now." Mrs. Malfoy said apprehensively. Harry nodded in agreement and led Mrs. Malfoy through the passages back up to the Headmistress's office.

Professor McGonagall was sitting behind her desk sipping on a cup of tea while speaking with Ginny and Neville when her fireplace suddenly pushed forwards then slid down the wall revealing a fair sized opening that Harry and Mrs. Malfoy were currently walking through.

Harry was amused a great deal by their reactions. Ginny looked as if she were berating herself for thinking that Harry could do anything in moderation and Luna looked, well like Luna, completely unfazed. McGonagall on the other hand was an entirely different matter. She seemed to have frozen, mid sip. Obviously the tea cups had a replenishment charm on them because her cup continued to pour tea down the front of her robes long after it should have been empty. She soon realized her folly and dropped the cup and began wiping down her robes, never taking her stern eyes off her former student.

"Mr. Potter I would greatly appreciate some warning next time you decide to pop in this way." She said coolly. Harry couldn't hide his amusement.

"I didn't pop in, I walked in. And I would think that the fireplace moving the way it did would be a sufficient warning." He said grinning.

"Don't get cute with me Potter. Now you said you only built passages connecting the common rooms so when did you do this." McGonagall demanded. Harry however was not intimidated or put out.

"Professor I don't recall ever using the words only or just or anything else implying that they were the only ones. I simply said that there were now secret passages connecting the common rooms as well as the Chamber of Secrets. I just didn't have enough time to familiarize everyone with the vast masterpiece that is, Marauder's Way." Harry finished in an over dramatic form.

"Oh my god." Ginny sighed as she took her head in her hands which brought everyone's attention to her.

“What is wrong Miss Weasley? As if I didn’t already know.” The professor muttered to herself after she asked the question. Ginny rubbed her eyes for a moment before she looked at Harry’s grinning face and answered.

“One of our times through Hogwarts I went with Harry since it was my first time. We both posed as sixth year exchange students and of course Harry became close friends with the Marauders. One night they convinced me to play a prank on the Slytherins with them and we were nearly caught by Snape because he had taken to following them around just trying to get them in trouble. Anyway we were hiding in the charms classroom when James said something sarcastic about building new secret passages. It became like a running joke between them, I don’t know I never found the humor in it, anyway they called it Marauder’s Way.”

“Yes I’m so glad you remembered. But now that dream, has become, a reality.” Harry said with a certain flash as he raised his hands to the sky. However everyone was looking at him as if he were completely insane.

“Mr. Potter are you, feeling alright?” Professor McGonagall asked with a note of concern.

“Actually I do feel kind of strange.” He said as everyone, including Mrs. Malfoy, looked at him in concern. Ginny however had the beginnings of a grin forming on her lips as Harry continued. “I feel, great. I haven’t felt this good since I first left the Dursley’s for my first year here.” And that was all he said as he backed into the passage and shut it again.

“Ok, what the hell is wrong with him? Is he on drugs or something?” Everyone turned to look at Professor McGonagall in shock.

“No professor, he was just able to drop much of his excess baggage last night. He released a good deal of pain that had been building up his entire life.” Everyone turned to Ginny but she had already returned to staring out the window and everyone knew they would get nothing else out of her on this matter.

“Um, just out of curiosity, all that stuff that was reported about going back in time to train was true?” Mrs. Malfoy asked suddenly.

“I’m bored. It’s too damn depressing in this school. We need to liven it up some.” Sirius said as he, Peter and Remus lounged about in Remus’ office.

“And how do you plan to do that Padfoot?” Remus asked absently as he sat grading papers. The answer was so damn obvious he shouldn’t have asked the question.

“Pranks on the Slytherins of course. What else would cheer this place up?” Peter answered with a grin.

“That is a very good idea Wormtail. I wish I had thought of that.” After a pointed look from Remus, Sirius continued. “Ok that was my idea as well. But it would hardly be appropriate for a professor to decide we should do pranks. And as I am your

assistant and Wormtail here is acting in a more freeloader capacity, it is appropriate that it be his idea.”

“Thanks a lot Padfoot, it’s always good to have a friend like you.” Peter replied sarcastically. “Besides I just need Madam Pomfry to give me the all clear then I am taking over transfiguration from McGonagall.”

“How much time does mommy Pomfry give you anyway?” Remus asked absently as his fingers began to itch with mischief.

“She said something or another about letting my ribs heal completely before doing any work. The only problem was she had to break them again just yesterday.” This immediately got his friends undivided attention.

“What the hell did she have to do that for?” Sirius nearly screamed.

“She said that since I didn’t have medical attention when Lucius broke them originally, they healed at odd angles so she had to undo that and heal them right. She fixed all that but their still sore as hell and she wants me to stay in the hospital wing for like two weeks. Which is another good reason to go out and play pranks. Sooner or later she is going to find me gone and come here looking for me. I’d rather not be here when she does.” Sirius and Remus shared a quick look before agreeing wholeheartedly.

“Definitely not!” The two said in unison.

“Definitely not what?” The three Marauders turned swiftly to find Harry standing behind them with a wicked smirk on his face. “Let me guess Peters in here hiding from Madam Pomfry while thinking about pranks. Sirius is sitting here annoying you with his boredom and wants to play pranks and you Remus were grading papers in an attempt to ‘not’ think about pranks.”

“Slick as always. So you know what we were doing so what are you doing?” Sirius asked curiously.

“Me, oh I’m standing here watching Peter hide, you being bored and Remus grade papers, while thinking about pranks.” This response had the Marauders completely baffled. Several minutes passed by before the first glimmer of understanding appeared in Remus’ eyes. The other two were still clueless.

“Did that make any sense to you?” Sirius whispered to Peter after a minute. He simply shook his head.

“Let me give you a clue. All the students are on their way to the Great Hall for lunch. Common rooms will be empty. I have a room in the ‘Slytherin’ common room. Which is empty.” Remus was trying to hold back a laugh while he was looking at his two confused friends. Unfortunately this cause it to come out more like a little girls giggle than anything else. “Oh for Merlin’s sake. It’s time to go prank the Slytherins!” Harry said after a moment. This caused an instant reaction among the three pranksters.

“YES!” Three exclaimed. “Wait, Harry how did you get here? We didn’t hear you apperate.” Peter asked.

“That is a bit of a surprise.” Harry said with a mischievous grin as he walked towards the back wall. The Marauders were more than just a little shocked when upon touching the wall it opened up into an archway.

“Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls it is my supreme honor to present to you, Marauder’s Way.” Harry said as he bowed in grandiose style.

“You, you, you actually built it?” Remus stammered as the meaning of the words sank in. “Where does it go?”

“Yes I did build it. And as for where it goes, it goes everywhere.” Harry said as he led the three into the dark passages. “Through these passages you can reach nearly every corridor, office and classroom. But that’s enough talk for now lets get busy.” Harry said as he began navigating the many twists and turn with proficiency.

“Harry, how do you know where you’re going in this maze?” Sirius asked. Without looking back Harry gave his explanation.

“If you can make your way through Hogwarts, you can find your way through here. The tunnels are laid out much like the schools corridors. I had to use a lot of space charms to make enough room for them but I think it was well worth it. Ah, here we are!” Harry finished as he opened the wall to his left. Harry led the way into his chambers and made his way across the floor to the entrance to the Slytherin common room.

“Wow Harry, this room is fantastic.” Remus said as he and his two old friends stood gaping at their surroundings.

“Thanks but I think we’re here for another reason.”

“Right, let’s go.” Sirius said good naturedly as he and Remus made their way over to Harry. Peter however was standing still with his face contorted in thought.

“Wait, I have a better idea.” He said so suddenly it made his three companions jump. With three sets of curious eyes upon him he explained. “Instead of pranking all of Slytherin by doing something to their common room or something why not focus on one Slytherin in particular. But what we do is something that will not only humiliate said person in front of the entire school but his own house as well.” Peter finished looking very excited.

“Ok, but what do you have in mind?” Harry asked slowly.

“Who would you say is the, how do I say this delicately, homeliest student in Slytherin?” Peter asked with a smile. There was no thought needed to find the answer.

“Millicent Bulstrode!” Harry and the two professors answered immediately.

“Ok so what do you think people would say if one morning, let’s say Malfoy’s, roommates woke up to find her in his bed with him?” All at once everyone burst into gales of laughter at the thought of the talk and rumors that this would create. But then suddenly Harry was hit with an idea.

“No, Malfoy is found in her bed! If she is found in Malfoy’s dorm it would be obvious that she went to him, and most jokes and comments would be directed at her. But if Malfoy goes to her, it’s an entirely different story isn’t it?” Suggestion was met with great excitement. So for the next three hours they sat pulling their ideas on how to pull their prank off.

Back in Professor McGonagall’s office Ginny had returned after lunch to discuss ways of improving the schools security and getting some of the students more involved in training their peers. However neither could concentrate much because their thoughts and curiosity were constantly being drawn to the box sitting on McGonagall’s desk. When Narcissa Malfoy had left the school she had returned a short time later and left the box with instructions that it be given to Harry.

It was no larger than a large shoe box and was made out of a dark cheery wood with ornate silver engravings along the edges. There did not appear to have a lock or latch to hold it closed. Due to this last detail Ginny’s curiosity got the better of her and tried to open it. The moment her hand touched the box she was thrown clear across the room where she landed with a thud against the wall. Needless to say, they did not try again.

They were pulled out of their nearly unspoken conversation when a great eagle owl flew in the window and dropped a letter on McGonagall’s desk and quickly flew back out. The headmistress quickly picked it up and read the words written on the envelope.

/Harry Potter
Urgent
N.M/

“Miss Weasley could you contact Mr. Potter and have him get up here as quickly as possible?” Ginny did not need to be told twice once she was shown the envelope.

‘Harry get up to McGonagall’s office now.’ She called out to him.

‘We’re almost there already, what’s the problem?’ Harry responded almost immediately.

‘I’m not sure but you just received a letter marked urgent that was delivered by the Malfoy’s owl.’ A few short moments later Harry and the Marauders burst out of the passage behind the fireplace. Harry picked up the letter and began reading it while the Marauders were gasping for breath. For a moment his eyes glanced at the box resting on the desk before going back to the letter. When he was finished reading his face was red with fury.

‘Luna, Neville get up to McGonagall’s office now.’ Harry demanded quickly.

Almost instantly there were two pops and the aforementioned people were standing before Harry.

“An attack is being launched against the Ministry, we’re leaving now. Neville I want you to stay here incase they decide to take the opportunity to attack here as well like last time.” Neville was not happy about staying behind but knew that Harry was right. Harry then turned and pointed to the three Marauders. “You three come with us, we could use some more skilled fighters.” With nods all around Harry turned and opened the curious box and removed a long and deadly looking dagger. Sirius gasped when he saw it but Harry paid little attention to it as he spun it in his hand, to get a feel for it, the slid it in to his belt.

The blade itself was fourteen inches long and seemed almost to slither out from the cross guard. The handle was darkened steel inlayed with silver. What had instantly caught Sirius’ attention was the Black family crest placed proudly in the center of the hilt.

“Alright let’s go.” Harry stated as he threw some Floo Powder into the fireplace and stepped in. “Ministry of Magic, Auror Headquarters.” He spoke clearly and vanished as the others followed him.

A moment later Harry stepped out of the fireplace in a seemingly deserted office. Looking around he found them all to be unoccupied. ‘The fights already started.’ He thought to himself.

“Harry why didn’t you wait for us?” Sirius said as he and the rest came running out of the first office. “Where is everyone?” He asked after looking around.

“Their fighting. Alright we’re going to split up into two groups, Sirius and Peter with me, Remus you go with Ginny and Luna. We have no idea where these guys are so watch your ass. Ok we’ll head off in this direction and you go the other. We will circle around the entire complex picking up people when we can and fighting when need be. We will meet up at the administration building as soon as possible. Lets go.” Harry finished and the two groups broke up heading in opposite directions.

They moved swiftly but quietly through the corridors of the Aurors Headquarters looking for any sign of life. Auror or Death Eater. But found none.

“Harry this might not be the right time.” Sirius said as he moved up beside his godson. “But where did that dagger come from?” Harry looked at Sirius with a confused look for a moment before he answered.

“Oh Narcissa Malfoy left it for me earlier.” He replied absently while turning down yet another empty corridor.

“Why would she do that?” Sirius asked hotly. Obviously he had no love for his cousin.

“Because she thought it would be ironic for Lucius to die by the blade she presented to him on their wedding day.” This comment completely floor not only

Sirius but Peter as well. "It's quite odd really, everyone thinks her to be some dark witch obsessed with purity of blood. But in reality she has probably spilled more Black and Malfoy blood than the entire core of Aurors has in the last fifty years. Things are not always as they seem Padfoot. And loyalties are not so easily determined." Harry suddenly stopped talking when they found several bodies littering the entrance hall of the Auror building.

"My god!" Peter said as he rushed to check for survivors. There were none. Twenty three dead. Sixteen Aurors and seven Death Eaters lay on the cold stone floor, hollow eyes filled with pain and fear staring up at the ceiling.

"Come on, we have to hurry if we want to have any chance to help." Harry said as he rushed out of the building with Peter and Sirius right behind him. "I'd rather not have to do it but we are going to have to go straight to the administration building and skip the others since that would be their prime target. You two change into your animagus forms, I'll carry Peter so we can move faster." Both nodded and an instant later they became Padfoot and Wormtail.

Harry picked up Wormtail and placed him on his back as he hunched over. It took all but a second to change but when he looked over Padfoot was looking at him with wide astounded eyes. With a jerk of his head Harry told Sirius that they needed to go. So if anyone was watching they would have seen a large black dog bounding across the plaza and next to him was a small grey rat, riding on the back of a massive lion.

As Harry began to run he could feel Peter's claws digging into his fur and skin tightly. In retrospect it probably would have been wise to give him fair warning on what he would be transforming into. Oh well too late for that now.

All three of them were sickened at the sight that met them while making their way across the plaza. Much like the entrance hall in the previous building, it was littered with dead. Hundreds lay here. The Death Eaters were obviously taking no prisoners. However Harry noticed that many of the red robed Death Eaters were merely stunned or injured.

With the administration building in sight Harry gasped in surprise and horror. The main staircase leading up to the massive doors was covered in lifeless bodies. A ragged group of wizards were firing curses through the doors towards the veritable sea of Death Eaters trying to get inside. One door was blasted away and lay smoldering on the ground indicating that some may have already made their way inside.

Out of the corner of his eye Harry saw a large group of weary Aurors that were pinned down along the side of an adjacent building with the enemy baring down on them. Wasting no more time he quickly changed back to human form, the other two quickly followed.

"Sirius I want you and Peter to make your way up along that building quickly. I'm going to make a bit of a diversion and when I do make a run for those Aurors and lead them to the side of the main building. Those Death Eaters are concentrating on

the doors right now so they probably won't see you. Then I'll do the same with that group and you haul ass through those doors and help fortify that position until I get there."

"What's the diversion?"

"You'll see. Just get to them and get them out fast." Sirius nodded as he and Peter went to take up their position. After taking a deep breath Harry striped off his cloak and released his wings with a sigh. A quick breath later and he launched himself into the air. Even at a stressful time like this he loved the feel of the air pushing across his face and over his body. There was just no better sensation. Well there was one but that was personal.

Seeing as Sirius was in position and there was no better time Harry made his move. He went into a steep dive over the unknowing Death Eaters as they pounded relentlessly at the besieged Aurors. Mere seconds had gone by when he crashed down like thunder in the front ranks of assaulting wizards with the force ten times that of a bludger. A massive fire ball went up within those lines and when it cleared Harry was standing there. But there was something different. He seemed to be nearly twice as large as before and had a strong golden aura that just shined brightly around him as a red haze appeared to move about his wings. In his hands he held Gryffindor's sword and Slytherin's ax. The sight was very unnerving more so because there were three of him.

The Death Eaters obviously knew this last bit to be some kind of illusion but they could not figure out which one was real. Much to their shock all three burst into action causing serious damage right from the start. If they were paying attention the Death Eaters would have figured out that the three moved in time so it was obvious that the two 'fake' Harrys were following the originals movements step by step and maybe they could find an advantage there. But you don't really think about something like that when you have three ten foot pissed off Harry Potters bearing down on you.

As Harry swept his sword in a wide arc through the scattered lines he saw Sirius and Peter lead the ragged Aurors to crouch along the side of the administration building. 'Thank god.' He thought as he quickly became one again and took off into the sky where he changed form into a phoenix and let out a loud shrill cry. When out of sight from the Death Eaters he made his way to Sirius' position. When a phoenix landed next to him he was a bit startled at first, as was everyone else, but that changed when the phoenix became Harry.

"Harry, what the hell was that?" Sirius almost yelled until he remembered where he was. Harry just waved off his question as he leaned against the wall and sank to the ground.

"Let me catch my breath." He said as he was gasping for air. All the Aurors were looking at him with profound respect. Sirius and Peter, although awe was shown in their eyes, look at him in concern. "Remus what are you doing here?" He asked when he realized his friend was among the Aurors.

"Just got here! Misses Weasley, Lovegood and I were heading over here when

we saw a big explosion so we picked up the pace. When we got here and saw, well, the three of you Miss Weasley began cursing your name for some reason. They already made it inside and are going to have everyone inside give us some cover when we make a run for the door.” Harry flinched back at the mention of Ginny. Damn she was going to kill him.

“Harry we have a bit of a problem here.” Peter began when he made his way back from checking on everyone. “Everyone here is exhausted, many are seriously injured. I don’t think even half of these people can stand back up much less run the hundred yards to the...” his last words were cut off when a loud cry was heard. “What the hell was that?” He exclaimed as he and everyone else began looking around. Harry just started laughing and pointed towards the clearing behind them.

Flying low across the clearing was a whole flock of about forty Phoenixes. No one could even remember hearing about so many in one place much less seeing it. The way the setting sun seemed to reflect off their red and gold plumage brought tears to some due to the sheer beauty of the site they made.

“Harry won’t the Death Eaters see and hear them?” Sirius asked in concern.

“No, a phoenix can make themselves know to some or not. If they wish it they could take up residence in the Great Hall and no one would know they were there except those they chose to show.” Harry’s attention was pulled from his godfather when the largest of the Phoenix landed before him.

/I am grateful you have come Lord Phoenix./ Harry said while inclining his head.

/We are brothers Phoenix Lord, it is our duty to come./ The magnificent bird replied as his fellows sang to the tired, replenishing their strength and healing some of the most serious injuries with tears. /There, that should satisfy propriety. Formality is such a tedious thing. It prevents one from getting to the heart of the matter straight off. I see your energy reserves are low, you best be careful or you will bring the Lady’s wrath down upon you again./ He continued with a hint of amusement after giving Harry an appraising look.

/From what I have been told her wrath will come down whether I am careful or not. I am told she was unhappy with my choice of diversion./

/And well she should be. Last time it nearly killed you./ Beside them Harry and the Lord Phoenix saw the others were finished and now looking towards them. /For goodness sakes./ The phoenix grumbled. /Our part to play here is done Phoenix Lord my best wishes go to you and yours in hopes of a swift end to the current conflict bla bla bla./ The phoenix said stiffly before inclining his head.

/My gratitude goes with you and your colony Lord Phoenix with hopes of a continued friendship./ Harry replied with amusement which earned him a hard look.

“Harry what was with all the bowing and pompous looks?” Remus asked as he watched the phoenixes fly away.

“Phoenixes are very wise and powerful creatures but they absolutely detest formality. So they don’t observe it. They do however expect their leaders to follow it.” Harry laughed.

“Oh, so what else did he say?” He asked curiously.

“Basically all we could get in between saying hello and good by was the fact that Ginny’s going to kill me.” Harry explained as he stood up slowly and stiffly which got Sirius’ immediate attention.

“Harry what’s wrong, with all that phoenix song you should be bouncing off the walls?” He asked with concern in his voice. Harry just shook his head as he straightened up.

“No I have to get my energy back the old fashion way. The song is nothing but communication and well, songs to the phoenix which technically I am part phoenix so tough luck for me. Alright is everyone ready? I want everyone who has injuries that could not be healed up front. You will move as a group, I don’t want anyone left out here.”

“Do you have enough energy to do, that thing, again?” Peter asked quickly.

“Probably not but I’m hoping I won’t have to. I’m going to create a shield much like the one I used at the beginning of the year when I questioned Fudge but it will be hard as hell to keep up over the whole group so run as fast as you can up that side staircase and cast as many curses as you can.”

‘Luna can you hear me?’ Harry called out.

‘Yes I can, when are you coming?’

‘We’re right about to. Count to ten then open up with every thing you have.’ He said as he looked around the corner at the mass of Death Eaters that looked about to make a full charge right through the doors.

“Alright let’s go.” Harry said as he quickly cast his shield charm.

The sudden rush of nearly one hundred Aurors startled the Death Eaters who were currently moving towards the door into stopping and taking up a defensive position. The rain of curses coming from inside the building and that from Harry’s group served to disorient and confuse some. But most opened up a hail of curses that battered at Harry’s shield with more force than it was designed to take. Half way to the door Harry knew his shield was going to fail. So with a powerful thrust of his wings he shot skyward before once again diving into the ranks of Death Eaters. As before this cause a near thunderous blast that shook the very ground and gave the Aurors sufficient time to get inside.

With his job done Harry quickly apparated inside where he appeared moments later, flat on his back and gasping for breath.

“You dumb son of a bitch!” Harry didn’t even need to open his eyes to know who that was.

“Yes Ginny I’m fine, how are you?” He said while Ginny was stalking up to him.

“Are you insane? Don’t you remember what happened last time you pulled that stunt? You definitely inherited Godric’s courage but it’s a shame you didn’t get Salazar’s intelligence.” After taking a few deep breaths she calmed down. “Well at least you’re alive.” She sighed as she pulled Harry to his feet. The three Marauders however were staring at her in shock.

“My god, her temper is worse than Molly’s.” Sirius muttered.

“Speaking of, where’s Ginny?” Harry asked as he looked around and noticed that she was no longer by his side. ‘Ginny where are you?’ It took several moments before he got his answer.

“I’m looking for my father. Harry I’ve never been here before where’s the Minister’s office?” Harry’s blood ran cold as he heard this.

“Luna contact Neville and tell him to get here and create a portal to take these people directly to Hogwarts.” Harry ordered and quickly apparated to Ginny’s position and carried them both to her father’s office.

Mr. Weasley was not in any form of good shape at the moment. He currently had no knowledge of any of the events taking place outside of his office due to his ‘guests’ who upon arriving placed a locking charm on the door and sound wards around the room to prevent anyone from knowing what was taking place inside.

“I have been looking forward to this day for a long time Weasley. I go through the trouble of sneaking in here passed many Aurors and officials not to mention that brain dead secretary. And for all of my hard work you won’t even do me the service of screaming out in pain.” Arthur Weasley however was not listening. All his attention was locked solely on the dead lifeless eyes of his son Percy

“You see, more bad manners. Don’t you know that it is polite to listen when someone is speaking with you. Or has all those years associating yourself with that muggle trash eaten away at your senses. CRUCIO!” The man yelled and Mr. Weasley fell back down thrashing in the agony that was ripping through his body. This had been going on for a few hours now but it felt like an eternity. Every second felt like a lifetime of pain and suffering then to be released for a time to listen to a despised enemy lecture him about his ‘faults’. By now every twitch of a muscle brought on an unbearable pain. But Arthur Weasley suffered his pain in silence. He would not scream out or moan for this man. Nothing on earth could make him. Just when he expected the next curse, it came; a thump and then silence. Looking up he saw eyes burning with a deep fire of anger and hatred. A green fire.

“H, H, ry?” Mr. Weasley said as he tried to get Harry’s name out through all the blood that had built up in his mouth and throat.

“Don’t try to speak! Here drink these!” Harry said as he pulled a few vials from his robes. As Ginny hung onto her father. “The blue one is for the pain and the other two are healing potions. Gin will take care of you while I deal with our friend here.” Mr. Weasley nodded gratefully as Harry turned his attention elsewhere.

With a few quick charms Mr. Weasley’s attacker was awake and completely immobile.

“I can not tell you what a relief this is Lucius. I made a rather important commitment today and you have given me the opportunity to fulfill it the same day. How lucky for me.” Harry then picked up Mr. Malfoy’s limp body and placed it roughly into the chair near him. Harry actually ‘perched’ on the back of the chair opposite him. Seeing a human crouched on the back of a chair staring down at you much like a vulture is pretty intimidating.

“Now on to business. Today I gave my word to someone that I would see to it that you were dead at the soonest possible moment but said person wanted a few things done before hand and I wholeheartedly agreed. After all, it is just so much more fun this way isn’t it?” Lucius was watching Harry intently with wide terrified eyes as he removed a dagger from his belt. Wait, he knew that dagger.

“Does this look familiar to you Lucius. Well I hope it does. It was presented to you nineteen years ago on your wedding day. A gift from your bride who you raped that very night.” Harry finished coldly. “I’m sure many of your friends could tell you how much I despise rapists, if they were still alive that is. But now we’re getting off track.” With a flourish wave he retrieved a piece of parchment from his robes. Besides Lucius, both Ginny and her father were watching with profound fascination. After all Harry had told no one of his talk with Mrs. Malfoy so it went without saying that no one knew what would happen here. Except Harry that is.

“Dear Mr. Potter:

I have just received word from my husband that there will be an attack against the Ministry sometime today. I do not know how large the force will be but it would have to be fairly large. Lucius himself will also be present.”

Narcissa

“Wasn’t that delightful. Apparently she does not think to highly of you. Now Lucius, it’s time to die.” Harry said with a good bit of satisfaction. “Only I’m going to give you the opportunity that you did not give Percy there, judging by the puncture wound in his back! You can speak now.” He said with a wave of his hand.

“Harry I’m going to get my father out of here.” Ginny told Harry as she helped her father to his feet.

“You would actually give me the chance to fight back?” Malfoy asked a little timidly. This question caused a wide grin to spread across Harry’s face. Harry’s answer was last thing either Ginny or Mr. Weasley heard.

“Did I say that? My mistake. No I’m going to give you the opportunity to SEE the death blow come.” Following this was a gasp and then a grunt then nothing else.

It was now well passed midnight and nearly everything was quiet at Hogwarts. Harry was currently in the process of waking up in a private room in the hospital where he had been taken after he passed out from exhaustion soon after returning to the castle. One touch of the crisp sheets and he could not help but groan. ‘Not again.’ He thought to himself. He was quickly pulled away from this thought however when a sudden movement to his right caught his attention.

“Ginny?”

“Oh good, your awake.” Her voice sounded cool and hard but Harry could tell by her face that she had been crying. And the fact that she was here was evidence enough that he was the reason some how.

“Um, you’re not going to start yelling at me again right now are you?” Harry asked nervously. He could handle a lot of things but a pissed off Ginny was a lot to deal with.

“No, it has to do with our discussion last night in your quarters.” She said in a flat emotionless tone.

“What about it?” He however could not keep his emotion out of his voice. He had obviously been waiting for this conversation.

“Yes I wanted to make sure that you won’t start blaming yourself for everything that had happened yesterday. The way things are right now we need everyone thinking clearly, not drowning their sorrows in booze.”

“Oh, that.” The atmosphere in that room changed real fast. It now reeked of disappointment. This was of course not what he was hoping for. He diverted his eyes and was now staring down at his hands that were resting on his lap. “No, you don’t have to worry about that. That’s over with. I can’t hide from my pain forever, I might as well look it in the eye.” Harry whispered softly.

“Good, that’s the answer I was hoping to get.” She said as she sat back down. “Now on to other business. Hold on give me a moment to figure out how to say this.” She then began speaking in some archaic language similar to Greek. Harry of course knew this language but he knew that Ginny was unaware of the fact. So he sat in shock and excitement listening as Ginny spoke to herself about how to tell Harry that she loved all the while unaware that her words were understood.

Ginny on the other hand was thinking of something different. For almost every waking hour since he told her that he loved her she has been trying to build up the courage and find away to tell him the same. The answer was simple, sucker him in. She was completely aware that Harry understood every word she was saying and she would use that to her advantage.

After ten minutes of debating with herself as she paced the floor she decided

sadly that she would not say anything because Harry probably said he loved her because of his extreme stress and intoxication the night before. When she turned around she found that she was now face to face with Harry. It took a great deal of self control to hold back a grin of victory. They just stood there staring into the others eyes for several minutes, neither willing to give up ground but both growing increasingly nervous. After all, what if they wait to long.

It was with this thought in mind that they both seemed to move in the same instant to quickly close the remaining gap of empty space between them. It was only a few short moments but it seemed life a hundred lifetimes as two sets of lips moved closer together. The feel of Ginny's warm breath on his face and the sweet perfumed fragrance of her hair made him weak in the knees and made his breath catch in the back of his throat.

When their lips finally met more raw emotion and passion passed through the two of them then either had ever before experienced with anyone else. It was a perfect moment. And they held that moment for quite some time.

It was nearly half an hour later when they separated again with wide grins and glowing faces. How they could breath was anyone's guess.

"I better lay back down, my legs don't feel quite as sturdy as they did before." Harry said not unlike a shy schoolboy with a crush.

"Yes that would be a good idea. You energy reserves are still less than half of what they should be. Here drink this." Ginny ordered him as she pushed him into his bed and handed him a goblet of Dreamless Sleep potion. Before sitting back down in her chair before looking at it critically. "Move over Harry I'm not sleeping in a chair." She said as she crawled into Harry's bed when he made room for her. Harry had draped his arm over her protectively as his potion began to pull him further and further from consciousness. This was how they fell asleep, and unfortunately this would be how they were found in the morning by Harry's friends. More than likely he would hear about it for years.

Chapter Twenty Three: Failure and Loss

“Harry you dog!” Several voices rang in Harry’s ears pulling him out of a deep sleep the next morning. Sitting up sharply he felt the rush of blood to his head, disorienting him for several seconds while he heard the laughter of his friends around him.

“Sorry to wake you Harry but what would Madam Pomfrey say if she found you like this?” Neville said causing Harry’s glare to become one of confusion. He was just about to voice this confusion when a sudden movement to his right nearly caused him to fall out of his bed in shock.

“Morning Harry.” Ginny said with a grin as she pecked Harry on the cheek. A deep blush crept across his face as he grinned, remembering the events of the night before, as his friends began to laugh once again. As Harry looked up to see Hermione, Luna, Neville and Ron grinning at him he noticed that despite their cheerful appearance they were all hurting deeply and he did not believe that it was entirely due to the attack on the Ministry.

“What’s wrong?” He asked flatly and his friend’s grins quickly disappeared and looks of anguish and loss replaced them. But no one answered his question. “WHAT?” He shouted and both Luna and Hermione broke down in tears and quickly left and Ron did not look far off from doing the same.

“Diagon Alley was attacked again. They waited until the fight at the Ministry was well underway before they attacked to make sure that our attention was focused on only one location. Anyone captured that had any connection with those at the ministry or the leaders at Hogwarts was killed right off to prevent them from causing any trouble due to their contacts. Neither Fred nor George have been heard of since they went to work yesterday. The bottom line Harry is that right now only Hogwarts is under our control. Refugees have been arriving since late last night. We were sent here to get you for a meeting that is already underway.” Neville finished in a dead tone of voice. Harry looked at him in horror as Ron was comforting Ginny with silent tears flowed freely down his face. But behind his tears was a great determination.

Ten minutes later Harry, Ginny, Ron and Neville walked into the Hall of the Phoenix where a great many people were arguing over what they must do now. Silence reined in as everyone watched in shock as a very pissed off Harry and his friends entering the hall in long quick strides, taking their place at the head of the table. The powerful aura of power and determination around Harry and his friends left everyone gawking at them in awe.

“Ok can someone please tell me what the hell happened?” Harry asked forcefully as he noticed Mrs. Weasley sobbing into her husband’s shoulder. Mr. Weasley himself was still looking quite a bit shaky after his ordeal the night before. Of course it was not only his physical wounds that were contributing to the weary and defeated look of the Weasley family patriarch. After all he had just lost three of his sons. Even despite this he looked completely determined causing Harry’s respect for the man to rise ten fold.

“Diagon Alley and most of the wizarding communities in Great Britain, with the exception of Hogsmead due to its close proximity to Hogwarts, fell to Lord Maul last night. Outside the country is anyone’s guess. No other attack was launched until you were fully committed at the Ministry. We received no word of any of these other attacks until late last night because due to the fighting at the Ministry the Floo network was disabled at some point and many were taken by surprise and wards were put up to prevent portkeys, apparition or even owls from being sent. The only thing we really need to know is how to proceed now.” Madam Bones informed Harry. She looked rather ragged and was sporting several bruises and scrapes on her face as a result of the fight the night before.

“It is my opinion that we should surrender. We can’t even begin to hope to match Lord Maul’s forces and supplies. At least with surrendering we have a chance at survival.” Harry and many others glared at the man speaking and he was very annoyed to find that it was Deputy Minister of research, Adalphus Attwater.

“Mr. Attwater if you make that suggestion again I will cast you out of this school and its grounds and then you will find out how merciful Lord Maul is. The only thing he despises more than those that oppose him, are cowards. You are a member of the Ministry, he will not allow you to live whether you are willing to submit to him or not. There is not a chance in hell that I will hand over this school and its students to that monster. If you want to leave then do so otherwise keep your mouth shut.” Harry said with sheer venom in his voice and it was clear that no one else would speak of surrender. “Now does anyone know anything about what’s going on in the outside world?” He asked as he looked around at the Aurors and Ministry officials but it was Neville that answered.

“I went out and did a bit of reconnaissance early this morning and the way things look it appears that Lord Maul is going to let people’s lives go on as normal as possible given the situation. His Death Eaters are acting much like a conquering army, taking out possible treats and making examples out of them and such. Apparently curfews will be imposed and surveillance will be everywhere. Shopkeepers and businessmen will be allowed to continue working as long as they, in no way, oppose Lord Maul. Even Gringotts will be open as usual since Lord Maul has the combined wealth of his Death Eaters to pull from. But of course these people will obviously still be subject to harassment and torture from the Death Eaters. So despite the limited freedom everyone is more terrified now than they were during Voldemort’s first rise to power.”

“That is very smart of him.” Harry murmured while frowning to himself.

“What do you mean by that Harry?” Peter asked. Harry’s head shot up with a look of confusion on his face. ‘Had I said that out loud?’ He asked himself before he answered Wormtail’s question.

“By letting the people keep at least some semblance of freedom he gave them something to hang on to. The first rule of nature, survival. As long as the average witch and wizard are allowed to continue their lives and their basic routine such as shopping, working and seeing to their daily needs, the chances of them opposing his rule is much less than if he were to bend them to his will as he ruled over them with

an iron fist. It is also due to this that he will keep at least a loose hold on his Death Eaters to prevent them from causing so much pain and anguish that even the most cowardly of wizards would put their fears behind them to fight. Ok has any of you done anything to help out in Hogsmead to prevent an attack there?" Harry finished off asking Luna and Neville since Ginny was in the hospital wing with him all night. Both Luna and Hermione, it seemed, had calmed down enough to attend the meeting which Harry was extremely grateful for. However Molly Weasley was anything but calm as were many others who had lost friends or family the night before. But the most painful emotions must have been those felt by those that simply did not know whether their loved ones were alive or dead. Harry knew the feeling and although he knew they would hate it, he could not prevent himself from pitying them. Especially the Weasleys who had treated him like family from the first day that they met him. And once again he could not help but feel guilty.

"The two of us have cast nearly every protection spell we know. Many Aurors and curse breakers have added their own as well. Right now Bill Weasley is down in the village supervising the raising of some wards and shields that Hermione and Professor Flitwick found in your library." Harry nodded thankfully at them before turning to Professor McGonagall.

"Professor, do you have any idea about the number of refugees that have arrived so far?"

"Roughly nine hundred arrived during the night and several hundred others since. St. Mungo's was evacuated about two hours ago and the Mediwitches and wizards brought their patients here. All forty seven healers escaped with them before the hospital fell under attack. They are currently set up on the third floor. We have not been able to get an accurate count because once we get finished more arrive. But at last count there was nearly sixteen hundred. Nearly half have had to set up camp on the school grounds because of lack of space within the castle itself." She answered sadly. She had been hurting a great deal since Albus' death as had everyone else. But she seemed to take it harder as he was the closest thing she had ever had to a father and then later became a beloved friend and colleague. Much to Harry's surprise and of that of those at the table, Snape, who was sitting next to her, lifted her hand in his and giving it a tender kiss. McGonagall looked up into his eyes with thanks and affection as he looked at her with concern and love. Shaking his head Harry pulled himself back to his original train of thought.

"Finding more space shouldn't be a problem. I can create new rooms within the castle and enlarge the old ones and if need be we can set some up in Hogsmead, it shouldn't be too difficult to create a shelter there. Once Bill and the others are finished setting up their wards in the village Luna, Ginny, Neville and myself will begin to strengthen those of Hogwarts and extend them until they protect Hogsmead as well. That should give them more than enough protection. The last thing I need to discuss is classes." Everyone looked at him in shock. 'Does he honestly believe that classes should be continued as normal?', 'How can the teachers or students actually even begin to think about studying at a time like this?'. These were just some of the questions people voiced in their head as Harry surveyed the room calmly.

"No this school will not continue as normal. That would be impossible. What I

am talking about is teaching the students and refugees how to fight. There are a great many skilled fighters here with the Aurors, Order and the D.A. It is you that I want to teach them.” The teachers, students and Aurors nodded in acceptance of their task before Harry continued. “Normal classes here should continue though with the exception of the electives. In their place the students will be taking extra lessons in defense, charms, potions and Transfiguration. Sorry Peter but you are going to have to start work early because Professor McGonagall will have other things on her hands.” Harry continued as he looked at one of his father’s old friends.

“No problem Harry! After I sneaked away from the hospital wing yesterday and found my way into a fight Mommy Pomfry made it clear that if I was stupid enough to wander into a battle than I was stupid enough to leave the hospital wing and start work. Personally I think it was just because she knew I would sneak out again anyway.” Wormtail stated as many laughed at the nickname given to the school nurse. After a short chuckle Harry began again.

“Some of the adults should be trained solely in healing by Madam Pomfry and the Mediwitches. It would probably be a good idea to train others to become animagi. Right now all we can hope to do is launch small raids against Lord Maul and hope to capture some Death Eaters that have any useful information. Other than that we have to see about preparing everyone here for what is to come. Right now Ginny, Neville and I will try to get as much information as we can by going out in our animagus forms since our forms are able to move around quickly and freely without attracting much notice.”

“But what about the government?” A young ministry employee asked. The young man reminded Harry a lot of Percy causing him a strong pang of guilt in his heart.

“And what government would that be? No disrespect meant to Mr. Weasley and the rest of you officials but most of those at the Ministry of Magic were wiped out last night and there is nearly nothing for you to govern over. As Hogwarts is our last stronghold, Headmistress McGonagall and myself are in charge. If we are not around then Neville and Mr. Weasley are.” This declaration caused a great many protests among those from the ministry.

“And why would Mr. Longbottom be in charge?” The same young man asked scathingly.

“Because I said so! You might as well think of Hogwarts as being under marshal law. You will do what you are told to do, when you are told to do it, you could not even begin to imagine how much thought we have put into this possibility. There will be a perfectly good reason behind everything we do whether we choose to share that reason with you or not. Just because you had some power within the ministry don’t think for one moment that that power and influence transfers here. We will have no deceptions, no illusions, we are in charge. You are not here to fight over authority, power and prestige, you are here to help fight for the freedom of those you are sworn to protect. Now let’s get down to business!” Harry finished irritably. This topic was not brought up again. The Order members and other ministry workers previously privy to Harry’s information and plans quickly silenced those officials that felt they

needed to voice their indignation at having to answer to a Hogwarts student.

The meeting went on for many hours while they planned out the steps that had to be taken if they wanted to protect as many people as possible while building up their strength and numbers. But as Harry said, 'The numbers don't matter unless they are capable of using their magic and their mind to the fullest of their abilities.'

"So brother mine, what was the haul for today?" Fred asked his brother as George was closing the safe in the back room of their shop in Diagon Alley. The two were closing their shop early so that they could meet some of their friends for dinner in the Leaky Cauldron. The day had been long but a steady stream of customers made up for it. Despite the large amounts of money they had been making since opening their shop, they were more concerned about the emotional state of mind of their customers. Therefore gifts were given freely to those that made any purchase, no matter how small.

"Our biggest day yet. We made well over seven hundred galleons. I'll tell you, every time someone comes in here and leaves with something in their bag I can't help but feel good that we're responsible for the fun they are going to have at the expense of another. I don't know it's just cool that we helping people forget about their troubles for a time." Fred could do nothing but nod in agreement with his brother.

"I agree! Seven hundred galleons buys a lot of laughs here. And I just contacted Christopher at Zonko's, they also brought in just over five hundred. So clearly a lot of people are having fun right now. I mean, um what was it that Harry said to us when he gave us his prize money from the tournament?" Fred asked his twin.

"He said something like, 'we could all use a few laughs, I've got a feeling we are going to need them more than usual before long.' It was something like that, and he was right. But thanks to some help from us and Zonko's the people are getting more than their fair share of laughs. Well come on we have to meet Lee and the girls in ten minutes." Fred nodded his head and the two were locking up their shop before heading to the Leaky Cauldron to meet their friends when a sudden tremendous rumbling was heard that seemed to shake the very ground they stood on.

"I don't like the sound of this!" Fred said quickly as he and his brother looked around in shock and fear. Nearly everyone on the streets were running this way and that in a blind panic which did not help to alleviate their fears.

"Fred, George!" The two red-headed twins spun around at the sound of their names to see Lee Jordan, Angelina Johnson, Alicia Spinnet and Katie Bell running towards them at top speed. "Get inside now!" Lee yelled at his two best friends when he reached their position. Fred and George made no protests about this order. Once inside however the twins rounded on their friends.

"What the hell is going on?" George asked although he already knew the answer.

"Death Eaters are swarming into the area and it appears that you two are high up on their list of targets." Upon seeing her friends shocked faces Angelina continued. "Just before the Death Eaters showed up the Floo network was disabled. Wards must

have been put up because no owls have been able to leave. When the Death Eaters first showed up the one in charge started shouting his orders. One of which was to capture and kill anyone with ties to the Ministry or to the leaders at Hogwarts. So naturally you being the minister's sons are in more danger than most if that is possible. We had to duck behind many buildings and hide a good deal before we got to you but were able to pick up some useful information while listening to them." She finished quickly and began to catch her breath while her friends looked at the twins with worried expressions. Fred and George however became angry.

"Alright follow us!" Fred ordered as he and his brother began walking back to the back room. "George set it up!" Their friends looked at them with confused expressions as they followed Fred and George began to speak an incantation while waving his wand in a large circle.

When they reached the store office George shut the door before he pointed his wand at the safe and with a flick of his wrist it dropped through an opening in the floor and fell until a splash was heard.

"Alright let's go!" He said as he lowered himself down into the hole and was quickly followed by Fred. The others stood side by side looking a little skeptical before Katie spoke.

"Well, its better than staying up here in the open." She said before she jumped into the darkness quickly followed by the others.

"Oh, hell! What the hell is this, a sewer?" Alicia exclaimed as she stood up in the knee deep water. The reactions of her friends were pretty similar to her own. However the twins did not answer this question.

"Alright tell us exactly what you heard the Death Eaters talking about, every detail." Katie took several deep breaths before she began.

"Well from what we could make out the Floo network was disabled by an attack on the ministry that began several hours ago. How they were able to keep people from finding out we don't know but apparently it has now been overrun and those still alive our cornered." She stopped for a moment to look at Fred and George to see their reaction only to get a nod to continue. "Anyway, besides these two attacks there are several others going on as we speak but of course no one knows because of the Floo network and the wards to prevent owls from leaving. Harry is also unaware of these other attacks because at the moment he is fighting at the Ministry so the Death Eaters are trying to secure these other areas and fortify as quickly as possible before Harry discovers these details and attacks before they are completely ready to defend against him. That is all we were able to find." Katie finished as Fred and George looked between their friends with faces as hard as stone.

"These tunnels were used throughout World War Two as shelter from the bombings over London." Fred began. "But because of cave-ins what we have here is a maze of shit. After the last attack on Diagon Ally George and I decided to make some secret passages under our store and we stumbled across these. We found that from within these tunnels you can go just about anywhere in a ten mile area. Of course for

most you would have to make your own exit but if you are quiet enough and work at night you can do it unnoticed and cause the Death Eaters a real headache in the process if you can sneak out of here and take some of them out before returning without being seen. And if the Death Eaters found their way down here they could search for a long time without finding anything. Plus there are the little surprises we left for them, you know, just in case.” The twins stood grinning while their four old friends stared at them with incomprehension.

“What, you mean form like an underground resistance group?” Lee asked a little shocked but he did not get the answer as a loud explosion sounded over them.

“What the hell was that?” Katie almost yelled while Fred and George were laughing.

“We set a sort of self destruct charm on the store. When twenty or more are within its walls the store goes taking everything and everyone with it. Of course right now many of our prank items have been let loose into the streets which I imagine is causing an awful lot of confusion and maybe even some panic. Many people saw us entering our store, with any luck the Death Eaters will think we were all killed in that blast.” George said with a wide grin on his face as his friends looked at him in horror.

“You mean twenty people were just killed up there?”

“Yes Angelina they were. After all they were coming to kill us and would have killed many others. Besides another spell was placed on the building. Now that it has self destructed we can go back up through the same hole we used to come down here and observe the goings on up on the street due to an illusionary charm we placed on store. As long as we do not leave the original area of the foundation no one will pay any attention to us. They won’t even know we were there.” Fred added.

“But how are we going to get word to Hogwarts that we are alive?” Alicia asked looking a little nervous.

“I don’t think that is a good idea right now.” Lee began much to the girl’s surprise. “We should wait until we have a good bit of information to pass on or it becomes absolutely necessary. We shouldn’t take the risk of the Death Eaters intercepting any messages unless we have to. If they find out were down here passing on information then that puts our families at even more risk and I would prefer mine to believe me dead than know the truth and have to worry about being killed themselves.” He finished and the others nodded in agreement.

“Lee’s right but in any case Fred and I have a way of making sure that they will not be able to figure out our messages but that is for another time, it should be getting dark by now so lets go have a look around.” George said and with a wave of his wand a ladder appeared leading back up to the secret opening in floor of their demolished store. Lee Jordan and the three former Gryffindor chasers quickly followed the twins up the ladder and gasped at the sight in front of them.

There seemed to be very little of the store still standing giving a clear view of every side street and ally around them. Weasley Wizard Wheezes was not the only

building damaged but it was the only one that was completely destroyed. Throughout the streets rubble was scattered about and many bodies were pushed to the side of the street. The twins both began reliving hard memories from the night of the first attack on the ally in which they were forced to kill for the first time. They had both worked through their feelings concerning that night with the help of the Marauders and realized that they had no choice.

They both snapped out of their thoughts as they saw a few wizards and witches walking in a defeated way back towards the Leaky Cauldron. One of which they recognized.

“George, grab him quickly before some Death Eaters show up.” Fred nodded just before he reached out, passed the building’s foundations and grabbed the man by his robes while covering his mouth. The shock of the situation prevented him from fighting immediately but by the time he started George had already pulled into the safety of the charms placed on the building.

“Chris calm down! It’s us.” He said as he released his friend and was joined by the others. Chris was probably about two years older than the twins and just as tall. He was well built and had light brown hair and a kind of metallic blue eyes that drove women wild. His features were sharp but handsome. The Zonko’s employee looked at the twins and their friends in shock before he found his voice.

“But, I saw this place blow up, you were inside?” Christopher stated as he looked at his two friends in shock.

“No we weren’t. And it was us that blew this place up. It would be much harder for them to catch us if they think that we’re already dead, don’t you think?” Fred asked in a calm tone. “And before you ask, they can’t see us or hear us right now. If they looked over here all they would see was a smoldering ruin. So what happened, did they let you go or what?” The red-head continued while his facial expression became serious once again.

“Actually they let most of us go. As long as we don’t cause any trouble for the Death Eaters then we are able to go about our normal lives. They must not be too bright if they thought that an employee at a joke and prank shop like me wouldn’t cause any problems. In which case I assume that you lot will be causing a little mischief yourself.” This of course was a statement not a question.

“Your assumption is correct.” George began. “Actually now would probably be a good time to start. Maybe we can figure out some information and pass it on to Hogwarts later unless it must be sent immediately.”

“Well where do you plan to start?” Katie asked a little worriedly.

“We might as well start off with first hand intelligence.” Fred said with a wicked grin as he pointed to two Death Eaters that had walked up from the direction of Gringotts and were now leaning against a wall right next to a small ally way.

“Good idea Fred, but we only need one of them.” When his brother nodded

grimly George turned back to their friends. "We will be right back."

"What? Don't even think about going out there right now George Weasley. Wait until it gets darker." Angelina almost yelled until she realized where she was. George however just grinned at his girlfriend.

"Don't worry hun, with my disguise, I'm invisible." He replied with a laugh before he and his brother transformed much to their friend's disbelief. After giving their friends a quick amused look both Fred and George, quickly and silently, ran across the street and slipped into the ally stopping just behind the two men.

"When the hell did that happen?" Angelina screeched to her companions as she waved her hand in the direction of the twins. The others could do nothing but shake their heads dumbly.

Crouching just inside the dark ally two reddish brown weasels were looking at each other. As if by silent agreement the two quickly transformed and instantly dragged the two dark wizards into the blackness behind them before they could register the soft humming sound that accompanied the twins transformation.

"What's going on, what happened?" Angelina and Katie asked quickly as their boyfriends disappeared into the ally with the Death Eaters.

"Their alright guys calm down." Alicia said as she tried to calm her friends. It did not seem to be working.

"Alright? How do you know if they are alright? They could have just been killed for all we know!" Katie informed her friend in a hysterical tone.

"Their not dead, that's them coming across the street!" Lee Jordan said with a grin as he pointed to the two rodents scampering towards their position, one carrying something that appeared to be a mechanical windup mouse in his mouth. The two girl's attitudes jumped from fear to anger in less than a heartbeat. They stood glaring until their respective boyfriends returned to their original form.

"Well, that went pretty good I'd say!"

"Indeed it did my esteemed brother." The twins commented after they had returned to their usual if not nerve racking selves. Before they could continue any further with their witty banter they noticed two very pissed off women baring down on them. This of course terrified the two brothers as they were having horrifying flashbacks of their mother's angry triads.

"You two! What the hell were you thinking? And when did the two of you plan on telling us that you were Animegmi?" It took several moments before either of the Weasley brothers were in any mental state to answer.

"Well we were thinking that we needed information. And we have been Animegmi since yesterday." Fred answered with a proud smile. This caused a round of confused looks to spread across their friends faces.

“What?”

“Well Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew have been teaching us almost everyday since the start of term at Hogwarts...”

“And we managed our first full transformation yesterday. It was a great deal of help to work through some issues we’ve had for a few days.” George picked up where his brother left off. He added this last part a bit cryptically which only served to confuse their friends.

“You two having issues? I find that hard to believe. But I though you said that you wanted to question one of the Death Eaters?” Christopher asked in an amused tone of voice.

“Oh, right. Here he is.” Fred said as he removed the small windup mouse from the pocket of his robes where he had put it after he made his transformation back to his usual self. “I transfigured him!” He stated proudly as he held the mouse up for all to see since he was never really good at the subject. The four ex-Gryffindors looked shocked that he could pull off such a difficult transfiguration as Christopher stood in awe as well. The twins grades in Professor McGonagall’s class were still notorious throughout Hogwarts and among it’s students.

“What about the other one?” Lee asked curiously.

“He was taken care of and tucked away.” George said grimly as he led the way back to the hidden entrance to the underground tunnels. His tone and the expression on his face clearly answered the question. The other Death Eater was dead. In fact after killing the second man, he to was transfigured to look like nothing more than a piece of harmless trash. That was how they were going to go about doing the things that were needed. The gathering of information was easy but taking care of some of the Death Eaters was a different story. They would have to take them out quickly and silently as to not draw attention and thus giving away their presence there. As long as the dark wizards simply vanish it could be argued that the men deserted or received instructions to go somewhere else.

For almost a week following the collapse of nearly the entire magical community in Great Britain Harry Potter and many others could be found strengthening the wards around the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry while many others were preparing to start teaching, the students and refugees alike, a curriculum solely based on defense and offensive magic. Gone was divination, herbology, and astronomy. The only elective that was to continue being taught was care of magical creatures. This was due to the magical creatures that had allied with Harry. It was believed, and with good reason, that the people had to learn about these animals to try to prevent anyone from unknowingly offend one of the powerful creatures causing them to drop their support for the light.

“Potter!” A familiar voice sneered from behind Harry as he made his way back towards the castle for dinner.

“I don’t have time for this Malfoy.” Harry stated calmly in return without turning or even slowing his pace. This only served to infuriate the Slytherin even more.

“I don’t give a damn what you have time for Potter, you will pay for what you did to my father. And I plan to be there when you do. You may have convinced my mother that it was your side to choose but someday soon you will lose.” Malfoy finished before he stomped off and Harry could do nothing but sigh.

Two days before Narcissa Malfoy had visited the school to speak to her son about his father’s death. She never mentioned Harry’s but Draco had decided that it was Harry who must have killed him. Lucius Malfoy was neither some great intellectual nor was he magically powerful. All his influence was drawn from his bank vault or the threat of force, with the help of his fellow Death Eaters of course. But to Draco, and many other dark wizards, Lucius was a patriot and an excellent role model for children. And it was these facts that made Harry believe that Draco would never turn away from the path that his father had paved for him. In many eyes he was a martyr and Harry was actually afraid that Mrs. Malfoy would hold good to her promise and kill her own son.

Harry walked into the Great Hall just in time to see a very familiar owl glide up to the high table and land in front of Sirius; he however paid it no attention as he looked sadly around the hall. The room had to be enlarged a great deal to accommodate everyone that now lived within the castle grounds. There were easily three times as many people as normal and the vast majority ate their supper with looks of utter defeat imprinted across their faces. The mood of those surrounding him were radiating pain, grief, anger and fear, and it tore at Harry’s heart. Looking back up to the high table he caught sight of his godfather looking at him with utmost surprise in his eyes. Quickly he waved Harry to follow him before he pulled Arthur and Molly Weasley from their seats and dragged them into the chamber off the Great Hall.

As Harry entered the chamber he noticed that Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were just as confused as them and were looking at Sirius for an explanation.

“Ok Sirius what’s going on?” He asked cautiously.

“I just received a letter,” He paused letting a grin spread across his face as the other looked on with curiosity. “From Fred and George.”

/THUMP/

Harry and Sirius looked over to see that Mrs. Weasley had fainted dead away. Mr. Weasley for his part hadn’t noticed, he was still staring at the former convict in shock.

Chapter Twenty Four- Malfoy's BIG Mistake

"Wha... what did you say?" Mr. Weasley asked in shock after several moments of silence. He still did not notice his wife lying unconscious at his feet.

"I said I received a letter from Fred and George!" Sirius repeated with a wide grin. The Weasley patriarch slumped into a near by chair where he held his head in his hands and wept with relief.

"Well, what does the letter say?" Harry prompted.

"Shouldn't we wake Molly up first?"

"Actually it would be better if you let me deal with Molly alone. She can be quite emotional at times like these. I will explain everything to her afterwards." Mr. Weasley decided as he tenderly picked his wife up and carefully deposited her into the chair he had been sitting before moving over to join Harry and Sirius. "What the hell are you talking about? That's a shopping list."

"Of course it isn't. It is a code that the Marauders used back in school. We were bored a couple weeks back so we taught it to them. Each item and the comments next to them are each separate phrases. Just basic information and small explanations, any more detail and the code could be compromised easier. Anyway, it says that Death Eaters had entered their shop so they blow it up so the Death Eaters believe them to be dead. They went underground with several others and have been disrupting things as much as they could and they want us to send someone to them so that person could bring more information to us." Sirius finished.

"That's it?" Mr. Weasley asked incredulously.

"Well like Sirius said Mr. Weasley, you can't really go into too much detail with this code. But they gave us everything we need to follow this up."

"Harry what do you mean? We have no idea where they are, all they said was that they have gone underground." This conversation was getting more confusing by the minute for Mr. Weasley. Normally he could handle things extremely well but when his children were involved he tended to slip up occasionally.

"Precisely, they went underground. Everything in this letter is literal and we can obviously assume that they are still in or somewhere near Diagon Alley so that narrows it down don't you think? So now we need to find someone to send looking for them, got any ideas Harry?" Harry stood thinking for several moments before a wide mischievous grin spread across his face.

"I've got the perfect person, err, creature, whatever, he will do nicely!" Harry said through a chuckle as he quickly scribbled a note on a piece of parchment. After finishing Harry folded the parchment up and gave a high pitched whistle.

"Um, Harry, what are you doing? Who are you thinking about?" Sirius was cut off from asking anymore questions when a sudden burst of flames appeared directly

above him. Stumbling back, he was relieved to see that it was only Fawks, who had positioned himself on Harry's shoulder. Taking a closer look he realized that the phoenix that once been the companion to Professor Dumbledore did not look so good. He was obviously still hurting over the passing of his friend and companion. Harry noticed this as well and it greatly saddened him. After all, a phoenix is a very emotional creature.

"Fawks, could you do me a favor and deliver this message?" Harry asked hopefully. For his part Fawks seemed to brighten up at the prospect of actually doing something and nodded eagerly. Harry tied the note to one of the bird's legs while he whispered in a conspiratorial way. Fawks almost seemed to sing with laughter as he vanished in a burst of flames. After the flames died down Harry looked up to see the two other men looking at him with confusion.

"Well, what was that all about? Who was that message for?" Sirius asked loudly. However Harry simply smiled.

"And ruin the surprise! No I don't think so." He chuckled as he walked back out of the room with two sets of eyes staring holes into the back of his head.

"Well you better get back out there. I'll wake Molly up and explain everything that I can." Sirius merely nodded and left as Arthur moved over towards his wife.

As Harry entered his room from the tunnels of 'Marauder's Way' he heard a commotion coming from behind the opposite wall. Against better judgment he decided to see what the Slytherins were up to. As he opened the door into the Slytherin common room the sight that met him made Harry seriously wished he had not gotten up that morning.

Nearly everyone was on their feet with wands drawn and seemed to be separated into two large groups and Harry had no doubt as to what the cause of this 'showdown' was. Obviously more than a few curses had already been thrown as there were a small number of unconscious students on the floor. The refugees that had been assigned to the common room were either with one of the groups or crammed against the wall in an attempt to avoid the fight. But it seemed all the students had picked a side. As of yet, no one had realized Harry was there.

"So Harken you are going to side with Potter instead of with the rest of Slytherin?" Malfoy sneered as he leveled his wand at the seventh year.

"Well if you remember correctly, Potter is the heir of Slytherin and as you can see, many in this house agree with me. We will not live in fear of a master that would torture and kill us for amusement."

"Lord Voldemort is Slytherin's heir!" Malfoy shouted. Apparently the idea of Harry being of Slytherin blood greatly offended him. This answer however simply made Chris Harken sneer.

"Yes, and he's dead now isn't he. And Lord Maul will soon follow." This seemed to be too much for Malfoy as he prepared to curse the boy standing opposite

him.

“ENOUGH!” Harry bellowed as he stormed out of the doorway leading into his room. The effect was instantaneous as everyone spun around and pointed their wands at the new arrival in fear. After realizing who it was Chris Harken and his group of Slytherins quickly lowered their wands and breathed a sigh of relief. Malfoy’s group, however, was another story. After a few minutes trying to compose himself Malfoy spoke up.

“What the hell are you doing here Potter?” He spat out with his wand pointing directly at Harry’s heart.

“Oh, didn’t you know, I live here now. I decided all the common rooms should be monitored so now one of the heirs is living in each of the houses. Sorry we didn’t inform you Malfoy but hey, shit happens. Now you,” He said pointing at those that had sided with Malfoy. “SIT DOWN.” With the intensity and near fury in Harry voice they seemed to have no choice but to do as they were told. Malfoy however did not listen though he was obviously very weak in the knees and had gone several shades paler.

“I told you that you were going to pay for killing my father... Crucio.” Everyone watched on in fear, delight, or shock at what Draco had done as the red flash of the pain curse sped towards Harry who simply stood there. Just before coming into contact with Harry’s chest his right arm shot out and he seemed to just ‘slap’ the curse aside, shocking all those in the room who believed that no one could block an unforgivable curse. However those such as Chris Harken and Blasie Zambini just stood there grinning.

“Now Malfoy, how is it that you are going to make me pay?” Draco was about to send another curse when he realized that his wand was now gone.

“So now you admit you were the one that killed him?” He bit out, working himself up into a rage.

“I never denied it, but yes I killed him!” Just as these words passed Harry’s lips Draco ran forwards and swung his fist as hard as he could. But alas, he was not fast enough. Harry had actually caught his fist and while grabbing his left arm he literally threw the blond aristocrat out of his way with ease. Draco however was not finished.

After quickly getting up off the floor he reached behind him to remove something from his belt. When his hand was free of his robes it was quite clear what he was doing. In his hand rested a very long dagger. It was much like the dagger Harry had used to kill Lucius Malfoy only this one was adorned with the Malfoy family crest instead of that of the Black family.

From his position behind Harry, Malfoy believed that he would never get a more perfect opportunity. With a strong arm and a quick flick of the wrist the dagger went spinning rapidly towards Harry’s exposed back as Draco had a look of triumph and pleasure on his face.

Many within the common room had tried to yell out to Harry but they were too late. In a move damn near too fast to see, Harry had spun around, caught the blade and sent it back at its owner while simultaneously casting a silencing charm on Draco. Nearly everyone looked away and cringed at the sight and sound of the dagger pushing into the flesh and bone of Draco's shoulder. The blade had sunk in so deep that it had literally pinned him to the wall behind him as his screams were muffled by the silencing charm.

"Like father like son. You get pleasure out of stabbing someone in the back don't you Malfoy? Especially someone you know you can't beat otherwise. Now, on to business! I have a few things to say and you WILL listen." Harry stated as he turned his attention back to the others in the room. Everyone's eyes were on him with a whole host of emotions playing out in their heads, from fear to admiration. With a quick glance from Harry Malfoy's friends quickly dropped their wands to the floor and sat down.

"Apparently a number of you within this room and others throughout this school are under the impression that I am ignorant. Or maybe you just think I'm blind." He began as he scanned the room for a moment. His eyes rested on a young woman for a moment before a slight smirk appeared on his lips. However no one noticed this. The woman appeared to be about nineteen years old with blond hair and hazel green eyes. She was, for lack of a better word, beautiful. But for the moment Harry had other concerns.

"There are those among you that seem to think that their midnight trips into the Forbidden Forest proceed unobserved and your messages go unnoticed. You seem to think that the potions and poisons you are brewing are well hidden with your feeble concealing charms." With each word that he spoke many cringed or shrank back in fear. "Well, I am neither ignorant, nor blind. I am aware that some of you support Lord Maul either by choice or from some necessity but rest assured, we know who you are. But there is someone in this room who has a 'date' with a really bad time." He let these words hang in the air as most within the common room began to shiver with fear. However Harry stopped his pacing behind the couch that the 'beautiful' blond witch was sitting. "Wouldn't you agree?" The question was directed to the young woman as he rested his hand on her shoulder. After several seconds of silence the woman quickly stood up with her wand leveled at Harry.

"I must say, I never expected to see your face again. But I am sure many will be delighted that you are here." Harry said calmly as he walked around the couch to stand directly in front of her.

"What, you didn't think that you were the only one capable of getting someone out of that hell hole did you?" She spat back as everyone looked on in confusion. The hatred in her voice seemed to know no bounds.

/Neville get down to the Slytherin common room and bring Sirius with you./

/Why, what's wrong?/ Neville's voice echoed with concern through Harry's head.

/Nothings wrong. An old friend dropped in to visit and I thought you two might

want to be here to greet her./ Neville was beyond confused but said he would be there quickly.

“Really, I thought someone like you might enjoy that environment. So Jericho got you out just so you could get caught again. I must say that is very sloppy work on both parts.” At seeing the confused woman’s face he continued. “Jericho is Lord Maul’s real name, didn’t you know that? What is it with these so called dark lords that makes them change their name to something ridiculous?” The woman began walking backwards as Harry slowly walked towards her. His casual tone was more than a little unnerving given the situation.

“How do know that is his real name?” She asked in a shaky voice, however her wand hand stayed firm.

“Oh didn’t he tell his Death Eaters? Well I know quite a bit about him. He is a good deal like Mr. Malfoy here.” Harry said as if he were discussing the weather. After a moments pause his whole demeanor darkened. “Where do you think your master learned to fight, he certainly didn’t train himself his mind is to dense. He was always whining and sniveling about having to train too hard.” At this point the girl was nearly running backwards and everyone, even Malfoy being still pinned to the wall, listen with rapped attention, fear nearly overwhelming them as they watched as Harry stalked his prey.

“Every pitiful little scrap he received and he would start sobbing like two year old girl, begging for it to stop. Death Eaters are swarming over this country yet he still hides. Why? He hides because he knows what I am going to do to him when I get my hands on him. I...” Harry’s triad was suddenly cut off as Neville and Sirius burst through the door. Every occupant of the common room breathed a sigh of relief that Harry’s attention was diverted to thoughts that could calm him down or restrain him if need be.

Being spooked by the interruption, Harry’s object of attention began firing curses at the new arrivals causing panic inside the common room. Students and refugees jumped from their seat and began running in every which direction, knocking each other over and fighting to evade any curses that ‘might’ come their way.

With one quick movement Harry disarmed and bound the woman after the first curse was thrown and the resulting panic only served to aggravate him further.

“SILENCE!” Sirius was mildly amused to see that Harry shouting brought order much faster than Dumbledore could do. Everyone had stopped in their tracks and turned their attention back to Harry. “Sit down and shut up!” Sirius didn’t hear Harry say this because his attention was somewhere else.

“Harry, why is Malfoy, well um, ‘nailed’ to the wall?” Sirius had kept a straight face while he asked but his eyes were dancing in delight.

“He started acting like his father!” Was Harry’s simple answer.

“Ah, tried to stab you in the back.”

“How did you know?” Harry was a little surprised that Sirius could have guessed that immediately.

“It’s simple really. That dagger has the Malfoy crest on it so he must have had it and the Malfoy line is notorious for its cowards and back stabbers, then again so is the Black family. Ah, so who is this vicious little thing?” He finished as he turned his attention towards the bound woman at his feet.

“Funny you should ask really.” Harry replied with a grin. With a few waves of his hand the woman’s skin seemed to bubble and expand. As her size and appearance changed many gasps and shrieks were heard. Of all the sounds echoing through the common room the most prominent were the cries of rage from Neville and Sirius.

/Ginny can you do me a favor?/

/What is it this time Harry?/

/I need you to see if you can get a couple of Dementors here any time soon./

/Why?/ She asked as she rolled over in bed where she was taking a nap.

/I’ll explain later./ With a huff Ginny rolled out of bed and began getting dressed.

“Alright Ginny is going to see about getting a few Dementors here to pick her up so...”

“You’re sending me to Azkaban.” Bellatrix Lestrange laughed shrilly. “I survived for fourteen years in there. Don’t think for one moment you are going to see me dragged away screaming.” She finished harshly as she spit in Harry’s face. After wiping his face Harry slowly turned his head back to the woman.

“No I don’t expect you to be doing much of anything. You see I am not sending you back to Azkaban, not entirely anyway.” He told her then turned to face the two men that were staring down at her with hatred dripping from every pore. “Neville take her into one of the dungeons and question her, use any method you feel like. If need be put up silencing charms. You have probably three hours until the Dementors can get here and when they do she is going to receive the kiss. And since she will undoubtedly be going through a hard time I will allow a member of her family to go with her. Sirius if would accompany Neville I would be greatly appreciative.” Harry finished off with an evil sort of smirk. He knew that neither Neville nor Sirius would take her interrogation to far. But neither she nor the other Slytherins knew that. After his friends had dragged Lestrange out of the common room Harry turned his attention back to its inhabitants.

“My job here is relatively easy to define.” He began in a soft deadpan voice. “I have to keep you all alive. I have lived longer, trained harder, fought more battles and seen more death then any of you could possibly imagine through your darkest fears. Everyone is looking to me and my friends to protect them and train them to fight for themselves. But yet there are some of you in this room who are actively working to

get the others in this school killed. Until now I have allowed your messages to pass through our protective wards because the information you have sent out was false. As I told you, I know who you are and I know what you have seen and heard. Until now we have been lenient with you but not anymore.”

“Rest assured we will win this war. Jericho will die by my hand. Those of you who do not want to fight we will try our best to protect you anyway. But those of you that choose to fight against us. You will either die or I will personally make sure you regret it for the rest of your life, or should I say, for the rest of what life I allow you to have. If your actions lead to the harm of anyone with these walls you will find yourself outside of Hogwarts and you will learn, firsthand, your master’s patience for those that are no longer useful to him. Do you understand?” Everyone nodded quickly and stiffly while looking visibly relieved that Harry seemed to be finished. “Good, now as for those of you that are having second thoughts about recent decisions I urge you to either speak to myself or Professor McGonagall about it. If you wish, we will not speak of your situation to anyone and those that know of your decisions will not bring it up again.” After everyone had nodded in understanding Harry made his way over to Malfoy and roughly pulled the dagger out of his shoulder causing the boy to crumple to the floor in a heap.

“Crabbe, take him to the hospital wing.” Harry found it rather funny how fast the lumbering idiot moved to pick his leader up off the floor and quickly carry him out of the common room. It was rare to see someone that big moving with such speed but then again fear was a good incentive to move faster and with the death of his other half (Goyle) he was not about to show any form of disrespect to anyone.

“Alright everyone, have a pleasant evening.” Harry said with a grim smile before exiting the common room with Blasie Zambini right behind him.

“Potter, don’t you think that was a bit harsh?” She asked swiftly but Harry could tell she approved. Stopping his trek back up out of the dungeons he turned to face her.

“No Blasie, I don’t. Everyone in that room is a Slytherin, or had been one. There is nothing a Slytherin responds better to than power and authority. It’s in their nature. I know that not all Slytherins are evil like many believe but if I had decided to play nice and treat them all as friends everyone of them would have immediately begun to think of ways to use me for their own advantages. I simply took that option away from them.”

“How very Slytherin of you!” She responded with a smirk as Harry walked away.

Fred and George were making their way through their network of tunnels towards the large chamber that served as their headquarters. Turning the final corner the twins stopped dead and quickly drew their wands.

Around sixty witches, wizards and even muggles were sitting stiffly or shifting about nervously. All had a look of apprehension or even fear on their faces. Looking around, believing the Death Eaters had found them, they became confused to see everyone watching a single individual lounging in a hammock hung up on to conjured trees. He simply laid there reading a book, seemingly unaware or unconcerned about

the wary looks he was receiving. The twins traded confused looks before speaking up.

“Um, what’s going on?” The sound of Fred’s voice caused everyone present to jump in surprise, many had even fallen out of their chairs. Looking back towards their mysterious visitor Fred and George were a little confused to see him gone.

“So you are Fred and George Weasley?” A powerful voice spoke up from behind them. Spinning around, wands raised, they were confronted with the pale face of an odd looking man. By all means he was not unsightly in the least. Standing six feet tall with powerful shoulders, aristocratic features and long smooth black hair cascading down his back, the twins were not uncomfortable to admit that he was rather handsome. No, what was odd about him were his eyes. Within those eyes seemed to be countless eons worth of knowledge and wisdom, but also the look of pain and loss that only one so old could obtain. After a few brief moments of staring they quickly realized that those eyes were glowing in a soft yet strong shade of purple. This feature above all others caused them to jump back with shouts of fear. The unknown visitor however looked far from offended, he simply smirked knowingly. “I see after all that staring we finally have comprehension. The others feared my presence here but could not understand why. Judging by your reaction you understand, do you not?” After unconsciously rubbing his neck George quickly raised his wand yet again.

“SOLARIS OLEM!” (My spelling sucks at this time of night and I haven’t had to use Latin in a while so don’t get mad.) A bright flash of light burst forth from his wand blinding nearly everyone in the area. After nearly thirty seconds the light began to recede and Fred turned to congratulate his ‘esteemed sibling’ on a good job when a soft clearing of the throat pulled their attention back in front of them. “Oh crap!” Groaned many within the chamber in unison.

“You did not think that such feeble spell casting could dispatch me did you? Such mundane methods may work on the Touched but we true vampires are not so easily defeated. Well, now that you have had your adrenalin rush and your sense of heroic bravado has been placated, why don’t we get to the reason I’m here?”

“The reason you’re here?” Lee Jordan asked with confusion. “So you don’t plan on sucking our necks or anything?” This question was answered with a great deal of laughter from their ‘immortal’ guest.

“If that were the reason for me venturing into these filthy catacombs I would have merely done it and be on my way by now.” He stated matter-of-factly, he even seemed a bit insulted. “My people have never forcefully taken the blood of an innocent or from a being of the light and we would die before doing so.” At seeing all the skeptical if not hostile gazes coming from those around him, with a soft growl he decided to elaborate. “Alright I guess we are going to have to have an impromptu history lesson before you trust me.” So after a few deep breaths he began.

“First off my name Neferatu. As I have already stated, I am a true vampire, which also means that I am a true elf.” It was not until he made this statement that the others noticed the tall pointed ears of a forest elf. “The elven people were one until a plague struck our people many millennia ago. Those of us that were around at the beginning have chosen to forget exactly when this event accrued because those who

lived through it have been assaulted with visions and memories so profound and terrifying that we wanted to erase for all time any knowledge of what had happened.”

“It began simple enough, with many going to see healers because of high fevers and nauseousness. But it quickly deteriorated into swollen and bleeding organs and then finally endings with a complete and total shutdown of every bodily cell. The first to die were buried according to our customs but as the death toll continued to climb they finally had no choice but to burn the bodies. When everything was over nearly sixty percent of our population was wiped out. This severe drop in population left our lands vulnerable to outside forces, an advantage they were quick to press.

Three weeks after the plague was under control those of us that had not been burned re-emerged from our graves as the first of the vampires and with an unquenchable thirst. Needless to say everyone received quite a shock. Even now we do not have the slightest clue as to what had caused it or how to possibly cure it. Anyway when our enemies chose to attack, we all fought. It was during the resulting battles that we discovered our lust for blood and used the fights to both protect our people and quench our thirst. It was some time before we discovered the effect our feeding had on other beings. Those that make up the Vampire Nations are the Touched, they were either turned during battle with my people or were turned by another from within the Nations. Since then my people have discovered how to feed without either killing or turning the individual that has allowed us to do so.” Neferatu seemed about to continue when he was interrupted by Katie Bell.

“Wait a minute, did you just say ‘the individual that has allowed’? Do you mean that people actually volunteer to give you their blood?” Katie and most others cringed at the thought but most of the muggles present simply remained in place stiffly. They had known about the magical world and some of its wonders since they had hooked up with the Weasley’s resistance but they had yet to come across any major magical creatures. And the fact that a vampire was standing right before them seemed to have given them quite a shock.

“Yes there are those who willingly give their blood for our survival. Unlike the Touched a true vampire is not totally dependent on human blood, though it is necessary. We can survive quite easily with a few small amounts every month and without the worry of being killed or turned, what is the problem. It is relatively painless and they are only giving up small amounts so that another may live. Now, on with business!” He continued before anyone could voice any questions. With a slight wave of the hand a large table appeared out of nowhere with enough room to seat everyone present.

“Where’s Potter?” Snape roared as he slammed past the portrait hole into Gryffindor Tower. Nearly everyone, students and refugees alike, rushed to get out of his way as he stormed over to the corner of the common room where Ron and Neville were playing chess. Ron was staring wide eyed at the enraged potions master, unable to make a sound. However Neville seemed to pay him no mind as he continued to focus on his game until he decided which piece to move.

“Professor, I do not think it wise for you to see him at this particular time, it will do no good what so ever.” He replied calmly.

“And why is that Longbottom? Do you think I should calm down first, after what he has done?” Snape asked scathingly, however Neville only seemed amused.

“Not at all professor, your temperament is of no concern really. The problem lies in the little ferret that is standing behind you with a smirk on his face and cradling his perfectly good arm like some crippled little boy. If he goes in there acting like himself then Madam Pomfrey will have to put him back together again.” Snape seemed unfazed by these words as Malfoy paled considerably.

“I want to see him NOW.”

“Good, no need for second trips.” Neville said with a malicious grin.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Snape snapped back.

“Harry’s in the hospital wing. I’m sure a bed is ready for Malfoy.”

Harry was indeed in the hospital with Luna and Tonks helping Madam Pomfrey take care of those in her care. Right now his primary concern was for Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom. He had retreated to his potions chamber to put the finishing touches on the potion on their last dose of what Tonks refers to as ‘brain food’.

“POTTER!” Snape bellowed as he stormed into the chamber causing Harry spill nearly all of the substance he was currently measuring out.

“God damn it Snape! Do you know how hard it is to get your hands on that much Unicorn blood?” Harry seethed as he spun around to face the potions master. Snape seemed to be taken back by this statement.

“What the hell are you using Unicorn blood for, planning on poisoning someone?” He asked with genuine, almost sadistic curiosity. Harry calmed down considerably and answered the question with a good bit of professional pride.

“No, it’s not a poison. I’m finishing up the final stage of the potion for Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom. When used in tandem with the other components the lethal qualities of both the Unicorn blood and the Basilisk venom are negated.”

“Final stage?” He asked quickly. “You said that it would take nearly six months to heal them, it’s only been just over two?”

“That’s right, but the small amount of Phoenix tears and blood I had used came from a Lord Phoenix rather than from a normal one. A Lord Phoenix is a great deal more powerful than the others but there has been almost no precedent for this situation so I had no way of calculating how much this deviation would alter the potion and the healing time. As of now the Longbottoms are more or less aware of their surrounding at all times. They will occasionally revert back to an almost childlike state and their memory is still mostly gone but they are progressing faster than I could have hoped.” Harry explained almost in a lecture tone as if he were standing before a class explaining a very exciting potion. Snape was about to simply take his word for it and

file the information away until another thought struck him.

“Then why did you not use your own tears like you did with the Centaurs, would that have made any difference?” He asked getting as excited as Snape does.

“No, technically I may be a very powerful phoenix but I am also technically human. And as such there are differences, such as with the tears. Phoenix tears are pearly white while mine remain clear, I need pure phoenix tears for this potion, nothing else will do.” Harry said as he carefully poured the unicorn blood into the simmering cauldron with a soft hiss. “I’m guessing Malfoy finally worked up the nerve to complain to someone about me, so what was it you wanted to yell at me about?” He asked as he turned his attention back to Snape. The potions professor looked thoroughly confused for a moment before a ‘slight’ scowl settled on his face.

“Yes, I would simply like to know why you felt the need to stab one of my students? By all rights you should be in Azkaban for attempted murder.” Snape roared but it was clear that it was done more for effect and principle than any belief in his words.

“By all rights, as you put it, I should have killed him. He tried to rally those in Slytherin against the rest of the school; he cast the Cruciatus on me and then tried to stab me in the back with the very same knife I used to stab him in the shoulder. I could have easily and legally killed him instead I choose to ‘save’ his life.” Harry said all this as if it were an unimportant subject that did not need to be addressed.

“SAVE HIS LIFE? At the rate you are going he will just leave this school to take an active role against the rest of the magical world. You are making yourself a dangerous enemy with him.”

“Do you really think I have anything to fear from Malfoy?” Harry said with a laugh. “Tell me professor, since the death of his father who has Malfoy spoken to, I mean really spoken to where his emotions show?” Snape took a moment to think but the answer was simple.

“That I have seen only myself and when he insults you and your friends. Those are the only times he even seems alive. The rest of the time he hides behind a mask of indifference.” He replied, wondering what this could have to do with their current discussion.

“Exactly, one man he respects,” Harry continue, pointing to Snape. “And another, he hates and fears. But Malfoy will not leave this school so do not worry about that. As I told Blasie, there is nothing a Slytherin responds better to than power and authority’. Draco has seen what myself and my friends are capable of and he would do anything to learn how to do it himself. Malfoy is rather weak physically, and magically he is only slightly above average but he is very intelligent. He would walk through fire to learn something that will make him stronger and feel safer, even if that meant spending time with someone he detests. Spending a lot of time with someone as they teach you very advanced magic could change your opinion of someone, could it not?”

Snape was staring with his mouth wide open like a gaping fish for a few minutes while he tried to process one specific detail. 'Potter is planning on training a Malfoy'? The more he thought about it the more it actually made sense. Harry would simply maneuver Malfoy's thoughts and beliefs over a period of time. Training Draco was an obvious solution for two reasons; it would give him a reason to be around Draco and would make the whole thing easier. After all, why would 'Potter' train 'Malfoy'?

"How very Slytherin." Snape finally responded, however Harry wasn't paying attention.

'Harry get down to the Entrance Hall. A vampire just entered the school and the ministry personal are going insane.' Neville exclaimed inside Harry's head. Without a moments pause or an explanation to Snape, Harry vanished.

Chapter Twenty Five: Vampires and Developments

When Harry suddenly appeared out of nowhere at the bottom of the marble staircase over looking the Entrance Hall no one noticed, nor did they notice the slight popping noise that followed his apperation. All in all Harry found the situation pretty damned amusing.

Roughly thirty or forty members of the Order of the Phoenix and ministry, not to mention several of the student body, were facing the magnificent double doors that led in from the school grounds. All had their wands drawn and pointed at the chest of a man that was standing calmly in front of them, though his eyes spoke of great annoyance and insult.

Despite their over whelming numerical superiority those same wizards and witches looked decidedly nervous as if their 'capture' would suddenly shoot bolts of lightning at them from his eyes.

"I will not ask this again, who are you and what is your reason for being here?" Madam Bones demanded. Despite the tense situation it seemed Madam Bones was one of the few to keep a cool head. However, for the lone figure at the door, her tone of voice left a lot to be demanded.

"I am who I am and that is no concern of yours. The reason for my presence here is between myself and Mr. Potter, no one else. I have shown you nothing but courtesy since my arrival. The response to that courtesy just proves how little you humans have advanced throughout the ages. Now I am going to see Mr. Potter now, if one of you chooses to try strong-arming me you will quickly find yourselves in a very bad position." Despite his enjoyment of the scene playing out before him Harry decided that now would be a good time to announce his presence.

"Neferatu, it's good to see!" Harry exclaimed as he descended the last few steps, pulling everyone's attention towards him.

"My Lord!" The vampire greeted with a bow, his eyes now dancing with laughter. Harry stopped in his tracks to glare at the man across from him.

“How many times do I have to tell you...” Harry cut off his statement knowing that Neferatu was simply trying to get a rise out of him. “Damn smart-ass elves.” He muttered himself before sighing and getting back on topic. “So I’m guessing you were able to get passed the Death Eaters and make contact with Fred and George?” This question brought gasps of shock from many in the hall and an insulted look from Neferatu. With the exception of the Weasley’s, Hermione and Sirius not many knew that the twins were still alive much less that they were passing on information.

“Of course I was able to. Was there any doubt?” He snapped in reply.

“Harry, your actually going to trust information you got from a vampire?” Remus asked with an almost scandalized look on his face. As soon as the question left his lips he wished that he had said nothing. When his eyes met the furious gaze Harry was sending him he briefly toyed with the idea of turning around and running for his life.

“You are a werewolf Remus, should I trust you less for that? Should I not trust Hagrid for being half giant? Don’t let a thousand years of prejudice cloud your judgment. Some have the luxury of such beliefs but we do not. You were once given a chance when everyone believed the worst of you and now you want to push the same burden on someone else. What makes you or anyone else in this room any more deserving of a chance to help?” When Harry was finished speaking he had everyone feeling greatly ashamed but he didn’t have time to enjoy it as he usually would. Turning to Ginny who had arrived soon after him, he quickly began giving out orders.

“Ginny can you take everyone down to the Phoenix Hall?” When she nodded Harry leaned down and gave her a quick deep kiss before turning to Neville. “I think it would be a good idea to send your grandmother up to sit with your parents for a while. At the rate they are progressing I have no idea when their memory will begin returning so I think it would be a good idea to have someone that knows them well with them at all times. Oh Ginny, I do not want Attwater in there, he will no longer be allowed to attend these meetings.” Harry shouted this last statement down the corridor as Neville was leaving to get his grandmother. With a wave of acknowledgement Ginny disappeared around the corner.

“Alright Bill I think it would be a good idea to gather up the rest of your family and head on down to the Hall. Myself and Neferatu will be in shortly.

“Ok but before the meeting starts I just need to know if my brothers are alright.” Bill had attempted for this to sound like a simple request but instead came out more like a desperate plea. He held his breath for several seconds before Neferatu’s lips turned up ever so slightly at the corners and gave a sharp nod. Letting out his breath in a loud relieved sigh Bill nodded his thanks and left to find his family as Harry and Neferatu headed towards Gryffindor’s secret room.

Those gathered within the Hall of the Phoenix were getting decidedly restless and increasingly aggravated. They had been waiting for Harry for nearly three and a

half hours now and were getting impatient. Many were muttering angrily and a few began to get up and leave when Harry had finally decided to put in an appearance.

“Everyone sit back down, we have got a lot to go over and we need to start now!” Harry said loudly as he and Neferatu entered the Hall quickly and made their way to the head of the table where they remained standing while everyone took their seats and looked towards them expectantly. “Three days ago Sirius received a message from Fred and George Weasley and some other former students. It would seem that they are running a fairly successful guerilla resistance against Lord Maul’s forces.” Harry was immediately cut off by many voices.

“Who are the others Mister Potter?” Seemed to be the loudest voiced question.

“For now their identities will remain anonymous. Some of these people have families that are at high risk from the Death Eaters and I will not put anyone in danger needlessly. Now back on topic. After reading the message I contacted Neferatu here and asked him to track down our wayward pranksters and get more detailed information from them. So my friend, if you will?” Harry asked looking at the Vampire standing beside him.

“Of course My Lord,” He began with a smirk, earning him a deep scowl from Harry and confused looks from everyone else. “From what I have gathered from Misters Weasley, their group has grown to over forty wizards and witches and nearly sixty muggles.”

“Why would they have muggles with them?” Cho Chang asked with curiosity. Then sudden interruption annoyed the vampire to no end but he answered the question politely nonetheless.

“Because, although Lord Maul is restraining his Death Eaters to some extent when attacking wizards, there is no restraint against muggles. Hundreds are dying every day and since the muggle authorities do not know what they are really fighting they can not plan accordingly. The muggle government here in England will fall within the next few days, it is unavoidable.

During a few raids the Death Eaters were ambushed by muggles. While they have no protection against magic it would seem that the Death Eaters do not yet understand how muggle weapons work so they cannot protect themselves from their guns, but that will soon change. The Weasleys and one of these muggle groups began pulling their strength together after they happened to ambush the same group of Death Eaters. By now there are many larger muggle groups all over London that are working in collusion with the Weasleys and their people. Does that answer your question my dear? It is fairly obvious that in the short time they have been operating they have given Lord Maul a serious headache. Between the kidnappings of a few Death Eaters at a time and those he has lost in ambushes and raids he has had to lower his defenses in southern London to reinforce Diagon Alley and the surrounding area. The Weasleys are currently hold twenty nine prisoners that have given them information about patrols, supplies and general defensive and offensive information they might have access to. It is unclear why these prisoners have not been killed by the same methods that those captured last month were subjected to but it is of general

agreement that it is because Lord Maul had not anticipated the possibility of his followers being captured in such fashion and had therefore not planned accordingly.

Though other members of their group they have made contacts in France, Denmark, Spain and Lithuania and are getting regular reports of more Death Eaters crossing the Channel into England through the Channel Tunnel so their movements won't be observed." The vampire stopped for a moment to make sure everyone was paying attention before he continued. And everyone was indeed paying attention. Every set of eyes were wide and unblinking as they listened in raped silence. Many at the table sat in shock and disbelief that the infamous Weasley twins could hold their attention on anything long enough to do what they had. And did it quickly as well.

"There are also other wizards and witches scattered throughout the country that are putting up a fight but it won't be long before they are over-run. They are planning and meeting mostly out of someone's basement kitchen so they have virtually no security so many are planning to make their way to London to join up with the Weasleys or come here. Any questions so far?" No one said a word for several moments before Professor Snape voiced his concerns. Those that were in the Entrance Hall grew apprehensive, knowing what he would say. They had no desire for Harry to lose his temper.

"I just have one question," he began with a sneer. "How do we know that we can trust this information? No Vampire has ever volunteered information to those fighting the dark arts much less meet with contacts and 'seeking out' news to report. So I repeat my question, how can we trust him?" He finished looking right in to Harry's eyes. Harry for his part almost seemed amused.

"Well I'm glad there is someone here that can back his concerns up with facts instead of ignorance. The answer to your question is simple. Besides the fact that I have known Neferatu here since the day he was born he is also an Elf and is incapable of lying. And as to why he would do it, he is helping because I asked him to. Any more questions before we move on?" Harry barely finished before Hermione started sputtering.

"An Elf, but, but they haven't been seen in centuries. And why would he listen to you, from what I have read Elves will take no orders from anyone but their own leaders, and you're not an Elf..."

"Hogwarts really makes them sharp, I would never have guessed you weren't an Elf." Neferatu said in an amused tone to Harry as Hermione rattled on about everything she had ever read about Elves worried that the information had been wrong. To people like Hermione printing wrong information in a book was something close to sacrilegious. After several moments it seemed like she would hyperventilate as she tried to remember everything she had ever studied, wondering if it was all wrong.

"Hermione, Hermione, HERMIONE! Calm down will you. I assure you that everything you were just ranting about Elves is true so stop worrying about it." Harry screamed to get her attention. But it was Neferatu that was able to calm her down with a single fact and a promise for more.

“Miss Granger, Harry is a Phoenix Lord and therefore a very influential spiritual leader among my people. Since you seem to take pride in your knowledge of the Elven world I would be happy to teach of my people. Knowledge no human has been privy to before.” He said with genuine sincerity. Many people read about the elves but these days they were seen as a myth or extinct so not many were interested enough to retain the information. Hermione truly impressed him.

Hearing his offer Hermione stopped her pacing and looked at Neferatu with wide staring eyes as her mouth opened and closed like a fish. After a moment a wide grin spread across her face and she seemed to be in a state of euphoria when Ron led her back to her seat, laughing softly at his girlfriend’s sudden change of attitude. After taking their seats Neferatu continued with his report.

“According to Fred and George Lord Maul had still not attacked Gringotts though many families had withdrawn their whole fortunes incase such an event were to accure. The Goblins were said to be growing increasingly hostile towards the Death Eaters for their lose of business and many were hoping for another of those good old fashion Goblin rebellions Professor Binns enjoys speaking of so much.”

Everyone was disheartened to hear that much of the rest of the magical world was in their same position. Spain seemed to be the largest of only a handful of holdouts in Europe and they would not last much longer. America was nearly in chaos with their President and military trying to fight while much of the rest of the government were trying to negotiate for peace, which only brought stronger attacks.

The one piece of good news was that Beauxbatons, the French school of magic, had not yet fallen though they had taken some strong hits. Durmstrang had fallen four days before with more than half of its students and teachers murdered. Everyone sat in silence for several minutes when the report was finished. The world was crumbling around them and it seemed there was nothing they could do about it.

“Are my boys going to come here, to Hogwarts?” Mrs. Weasley asked quietly. With her head down and tears streaming down her face it was clear she already knew the answer. Neferatu glanced at Harry for a moment before he turned his sad eyes to the Weasley matriarch.

“No Madam, they will not. Every man and woman there opted to stay and continue the fight they have started. I can assure you that despite their reputations and those of some of their more colorful colleagues, every one of them takes this very seriously. Everything they do is planned and timed to near perfection with the utmost safety in mind. They know what they are doing.” Despite her over sense of worry Mrs. Weasley could not help but swell up with pride for her twin sons and what they have accomplished. After a moment Neferatu looked at the Marauders. “I hear you are the ones that trained Fred and George in their animagus transformation, and in only two and half months. Very impressive!” This got quite a bit of attention.

“You did what?” Molly screamed causing many to cover their ears and grimace while the Marauders went pale.

Harry now sat alone at the massive table within the Hall of the Phoenix trying to process all the information he had been given and form plans to help those that are still holding out against Lord Maul. The meeting had been over for over an hour and everyone decided they would continue in the morning. Harry just stayed in his chair while everyone else left so he could have some time to think by himself. Ginny would have remained with him but he assured her that he was alright and just needed to think so she reluctantly left to seek her bed for the night.

He was pretty much driving himself mad with worry, trying to think of some way to help. After all he had the well being of those within Hogwarts to think about so he couldn't go off to help the Spanish or Americans prolong the inevitable. Even if he were to throw all his power and might behind them their governments would still fall. He would be very egotistical and foolish to think otherwise.

“Harry?”

Harry's head snapped up as the quiet voice pulled him from his thoughts. He was more than a little surprised to see that the voice belonged to Colin Creevy. He stood at the opposite end of the table and Harry noticed that he stood there with his shoulders slumped, his head down, his eyes red and looking nothing like the fierce warrior that had fought so strongly when Voldemort attacked the school.

“How did you get down here?” Harry asked with confusion. Even after taking in his appearance that was all he could think to ask.

“Well I wanted to talk to you and Neville said you were still in here. You and the others use your weapons to get in here so I thought I would see if mine would work and it opened both the gargoyles and the hole in the wall. Though I don't know why it worked.” Colin stammered out nervously at a quick pace. After a moment's thought it came to Harry.

“Oh, ok. Merlin made your sword for you, he also made the weapons of the four founders and Excalibur, so it stands to reason that your sword would have the same capabilities.” Harry paused a moment before raising his voice. “WAIT A MINUTE. Excalibur was crafted a full two centuries before Hogwarts was built, so why would it have some degree of control over the school?” Harry asked to no one as Colin watched him with a bewildered look. He kept mumbling something about impossibilities and different charms for magical weapons. Finally after declaring that Excalibur shouldn't be able to control ‘anything’ in the school he decided to go to his library and research it.

“Harry!” Colin called with an amused look. When Harry turned around Colin simply pointed to his left. Looking to his side Harry's face quickly fell.

“Well, shit. That's... Disappointing.” He sighed dejectedly as he looked at the stone that held Excalibur for so many centuries. He was obviously hoping for a much more complicated and involved explanation. After a moment's brooding about having nothing to do he turned his attention back to Colin. “So what was it you wanted to talk

about.?" He asked with hopes that it would be an interesting conversation. He was a little surprised however when Colin seemed to go into a deep depression right before his eyes. "What's wrong?" Harry asked with concern. Colin took a seat across from Harry and put his head in his hands and sat quietly for several moments taking slow deep breaths.

"How... How do you live with the fact that you could quite possibly live forever?" Colin asked slowly as he lifted his head back up, unshed tears glistening in his eyes. It took Harry a moment to shake off the shock and depression that that question always brought. It still surprised him every time someone asked that and it was more than a little depressing to think about. It was all the more complicated because the person asking was in the same boat as him. Every other time he had brushed the question off but he could not do that here, nor could he sugarcoat his answer.

"Well besides us the only people, humans anyway, that know we can are Dora, Ginny, Neville and Luna since the same applies for them, so that makes it easier. No one knows about you and Dora. We can live out our lives with our friends and family; using illusions to make us age and they are none the wiser. They will treat us the same as they always have.

Everyone within the DA and the Order of the Phoenix knows that myself and the other Heirs are technically several centuries old but since we led them to believe that that was only possible as a byproduct of the training they over look and believe we will now live out normal human life spans. Not even our closest friends and family know the truth and more than likely, it will remain that way."

"That's not what I meant Harry. I mean, how can you live with the knowledge that you will outlive all your friends and all those you love? Everyone in this school will one day be dead, that is unavoidable, but I will still be alive." Colin's voice became more shaky as he stood and began pacing around the table. "At first I thought it would be cool, you know, get to see how the world grows and develops. But then Dennis was killed, then my parents..."

"Wait, wait, wait. What happened to your parents? I thought they were brought here?" Harry asked in shock and confusion.

"They were but decided to go home after Dennis was killed. I got an owl from Mrs. Johnson this afternoon telling me what happened." The younger boy almost sobbed.

"Who's Mrs. Johnson?" Harry asked quietly hoping to steer the conversation in another direction to give Colin a chance to collect himself.

"Angelina's mom. We lived in the same town and she knew I was a Gryffindor with her daughter so when she found out they were killed she wanted to make sure I found out what happened." With this said Colin sat back down and began weeping uncontrollably and Harry started to mentally spout every obscenity he knew at the injustice of the world while trying to figure out what he should do. In the end he opted to simply stand behind the younger boy and gently squeeze his shoulder in a

supportive way.

“As cliché as this sounds, we’re your family now Colin. Myself and the others will always be here for you, from now until the end of time if need be.”

The following morning the meeting continued but at a swifter pace since no one really had anything to say. So around noon found Harry supervising his weapons class that had now grown considerably since the arrival of all the refugees. He currently had his students working with dull blunt practice swords so that they could get used to the weight and balance of the actual weapon that they did not get working with wooden ones.

As he surveyed the room he saw many with a great deal of potential and a number that were already skilled with a blade were helping the others out. There were some, however, that seemed hopeless. Case and point; Draco Malfoy could be seen on the far side of the hall paired up with Crabbe. At the moment he was swigging an enormous two handed broadsword almost wildly obviously thinking he was working a routine of great skill. Shaking his head sadly Harry made his way over to the pair.

Malfoy had just brought his sword up over his head and was preparing a strong hack at his sparing partner when a strong hand swiftly grabbed the blade and pulled it from his grip causing him to stumble forward several steps.

“What the hell did you do that for?” He screamed in rage as he turned to face the figure behind him. His anger quickly turned to apprehension when he noticed it was Harry.

“Tell me Malfoy, what was the purpose of that auspicious display of yours?” He asked calmly. Malfoy quickly hid his emotions behind his well trained aristocratic mask of indifference when he answered.

“I was about to disarm my opponent, what did it look like Potter?” He spat out gaining the attention of those around him.

“It looked like a disaster. Why did you choose this sword?”

“It was the strongest!” He sneered as if that was the obvious answer.

“The strongest!” Harry repeated slowly as he shook his head. “I’ll tell you what Malfoy; we will put on a little demonstration, you and I. You will use this,” He said as he handed the broadsword back to Malfoy. “And I will use this.” He finished as he borrowed a long thin rapier from Blaise Zabini. Thinking he could easily break Harry’s sword and defeat him in front of everyone, Malfoy quickly agreed, taking his place in front of him.

“Anytime you’re ready Malfoy!” At Harry’s words he quickly pulled up his sword to swing at his opponent when he suddenly stopped. Trailing his eyes down he gulped as he saw, and felt, Harry’s blade pressing against his throat. “In many situations strength can be your greatest weakness. With your size and build you should rely on speed and finesse. A blade this size will make you clumsy and get you

killed.” Harry finished as he handed the sword back to Blaise with a thank you and turned back to the head of the hall.

Draco with his wounded pride simply couldn’t let it go at that however.

The hall became deathly silent as the green light of the killing curse sped quickly towards Harry’s exposed back.

“You just won’t learn, will you Malfoy?” Harry asked calmly as he slowly turned around to face the young Slytherin, the killing curse frozen just in front of his chest. With a wave of his hand the curse dissipated. “Put your wands away, all of you!” He spoke fiercely to the entire hall that all had their wands trained on one location, Draco’s heart. His order was immediately obeyed with some reluctance.

Draco, however, didn’t notice the actions of others as he looked on at Harry in shock and fear. He had yet to lower his wand which was shaking significantly in his outstretched hand. As Harry began walking towards him all he could do was stare in an odd sort of astonishment. He was well beyond fear, so far in fact that it felt as if it wasn’t even happening to him. Like he was watching the scene through someone’s pensive. However the reality of the situation came crashing back down on him as Harry gripped his right arm and a searing pain momentarily flashed through him causing him to drop his wand to the floor with a clatter.

“What the hell did you do to me?” The young aristocrat yelled but quickly silenced under Harry’s glare.

“I just saved your life.” Harry responded with a growl before he turned to the rest of those assembled in the hall. “That’s enough for tonight, put your practice swords back where you got them and have a nice evening.” And with that Harry stalked out of the hall just as Malfoy began pulling up his right sleeve. The sight that greeted him shocked him to his very core, so much in fact that he decided he had had enough for one evening and promptly fainted with a magnificent phoenix tattoo clearly visible covering his arm from shoulder to elbow.

Chapter Twenty Six: Royal Apprenticeship

“Professor Snape, look what that bastard Potter did to me!” Draco Malfoy growled as he stormed into the dungeon office the Slytherin’s head of house. Snape seemed to sigh in exasperation until Draco lifted his sleeve to reveal the phoenix tattoo on his right arm. Upon seeing the mark the breath in his throat caught sending him into a loud coughing fit. This response was not reassuring to the Slytherin prince

“What, is it dangerous, what is it?” He asked in a frantic tone of voice. After getting himself under control Snape simply stared at the young man in shock for a few moments before answering.

“Mr. Malfoy, that is the mark of an apprentice! The fact that he has given you an honor such as this leaves me to wonder what you have done.” The potions master pondered with his eyes locked on those of the younger man.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Draco demanded defensively.

“I mean simply that now that you are legally, and magically, Potter’s apprentice, anyone who wishes you harm in any way will have to face reprisals from Potter himself. Basically, that mark makes you untouchable to anyone, even the law. I had known that he wished to train you but I can’t see him doing so on this level unless you needed that protection. It is now impossible for you to use offensive magic against another living being without expressed permission. You are now bound to Potter by a magical contract. It would seem that you have a new master.” He answered in a voice that nearly betrayed his shock, amusement and awe at the situation. Draco on the other hand had a look of pure horror and disgust as well as a little fear. His father had taken on a few apprentices in the past and their lives were absolute hell.

“Me, take orders from Potter? That is never going to happen. If he thinks for one moment that I am going to hang on his every word then he is a bigger idiot than I thought. I refuse to bow down to that piece of trash and do every degrading chore he thinks to give me. I refuse to sit back and let him humiliate me. I am a Malfoy and refuse to call Potter my master.” Malfoy bit out scathingly.

“Draco if that is what you think being an apprentice entails then you are sadly mistaken. Most of those that have taken an apprentice the last few years have been Death Eaters. They take someone on simply because they wish to have the same level of control over someone that Voldemort had over them. They would torture their student, humiliate them and even made them to kiss the hem of their robes.”

“In reality all an apprentice, under a legitimate master, is a student that is bound by magical contract to pay attention and learn everything that their master teaches them. Likewise Potter is bound by contract to teach you to the best of his abilities. You have known Potter for six years now and while it is true that you must follow every command and answer any question asked do you really believe that Potter would abuse this situation. To be honest I don’t know much about Potter but since his return I can probably relate to him more than many of his friends can. So I do know that he will take this very seriously. The Harry Potter you went to school with is dead and buried; he is now a completely different person.”

“But he killed my father!” Draco spat.

“Yes, he did.” Snape drawled then sighed and leaned back in his chair before continuing. “Your father is dead because of his own choices, not Potter’s. Normally I probably would not say this to a student who has lost a parent but I will nonetheless. Your father was no great man as you like to make him out to be. He was a weak, murdering coward, plain and simple. Not once had he ever fought a fair fight. Every man, woman and child that he had ever killed or tortured were either unarmed, restrained by others or he attacked them from behind. If you want to avenge your father’s death that your business, I’m sure you will fight very bravely, and die very quickly. So I suggest you learn all that you can from Potter before you seek vengeance again. You probably still won’t have much of a chance but at least you will have one.” With this said Snape stood up and walked out of his office leaving a very confused, shocked and angry Draco Malfoy behind to think over what he had just heard.

“Alright everyone, get ready!” George whispered in a harsh voice. Everyone nodded as they moved quickly and quietly through the almost blinding darkness to their positions among the stores and apartment building scattered about the streets about ten miles from the Leaky Cauldron. Fred observed from his position on the rooftops as everyone fidgeted about as they waited for the Death Eater patrol to make it down the narrow lane. Of the twelve other people the twins had brought on this little ambush six muggle soldiers and six other wizards made up their fourteen man team. From their concealed positions, guns and wands alike were pointed and ready to let loose a hail of bullets and curses at their enemies while at the same time many other teams were laying in wait at other locations throughout London. For communication between team members Fred and George modified the headset radios used by the soldiers to make them more effective. They were now nearly unbreakable, prevented their transmissions from being intercepted but probably most importantly, they were completely silent to everyone else you were wearing the headset. This gave the added bonus of the radio not giving up your position if you had a Death Eater nearby searching for you. You could still receive transmissions but everyone close by would be completely unaware.

“Here they come. It looks like twenty four men in four six man columns, standard cover formation. Seventy yards from target location, roughly one minute until arrival.” A rough voice announced over the radio.

“Thank you Captain, everyone down here is in place and ready to engage.” Fred replied just as the Death Eaters were making their way around the corner and heading right towards their position. The closer the dark wizards came the more nervous everyone became. No matter how many raids, ambushes or surveillance missions they had been on they would never get used to the killing, and they preferred it that way.

“Alright, give them another twenty feet then nail the coffin shut.” George ordered grimly through the headset. While the entire raiding party was concentrating on the advancing Death Eaters no one noticed a small group of about twelve muggles making their way up from the opposite end of the street. Upon seeing the dark wizards the group ducked into a nearby ally for cover just before shots were heard and flashes of light flashed through the sky.

“Major Tutsbury, there are seven Death Eaters falling back towards your position. They look to be pretty battered but still fully capable to fight, so be careful.” Fred called out as he darted out from his concealed location to slit the throat of a nearby enemy. Before the body had even hit the ground he had drawn his wand and stunned two more.

“Thanks for the heads up. Miss Bell, Mr. Jordan and Lieutenant Sanderson are pursuing a few that made a run for it at the moment so we are a little weak on the left side but we will get them, we have the best sharpshooter in the whole British Army on the roof right now.” The old soldier replied as he continued to fire.

The fight was fast paced, fierce and gut wrenching. The dozen or so hiding muggles watched in a detached sort of fascination as a hail of light and lead found their way to their targets. Death Eaters began to fall in rapid secession, many fleeing in panic only to be set upon by those emerging from concealment at their rear.

“Bugger me!” A gruff voice whispered hoarsely in astonishment.

“A perfect trap. Perfectly planned, timed and executed.” An awed voice replied. “It seems we have probably ‘accidentally’ stumbled upon our perfect opportunity and best hope if we are to succeed tonight.” He finished while giving a quick sideways glance towards one of his companions that all the rest seemed to be huddled around protectively. His attention was brought back towards the fight only to realize that it was already over and a tall red headed man was quickly issuing orders that everyone was quick to follow.

“Katie, how are you doing with those Death Eaters you chased after?” Fred asked through the headset after the fighting had died down around him.

“We’re on our way back now, we captured two of them but the third wouldn’t give up and we could get a cleat shot at him so Lee took him out with an explosion hex which brought down the roof.” Came the soft reply from the exhausted Gryffindor chaser.

“Alright hurry back, we are about to leave.” Fred concluded before speaking out loud to all those around him. “Alright everyone grab the prisoners and get our wounded and let’s get the hell out of here before anyone comes along to catch us off guard. Major Tutsbury, I want you and Captain Pratt to hold your positions until Katie and her team get back with their prisoners, then fall back with them. Chris, you stay with me. Everyone else get going and see if you can find out how our other groups fared tonight.” Everyone quickly got to their tasks as George lifted the manhole cover that sat in the center of the street and quickly dropped in and was quickly followed by those carried either bound and gagged Death Eaters or wounded friends.

Not wanting to miss their opportunity the twelve people emerged from the dark alleyway and began to approach Fred and Chris who were standing on the street side by side looking down to the other end while waiting for their companions to catch up.

“One more step and I will kill you!” Fred spoke up before turning around. The approaching muggles stopped dead in their tracks due to both the threat as well as in shock that they were actually heard. “What are you doing here?” It was a simple

enough question but carried a lot of meaning. It was at this time that one of the more excitable members of this group regained both his composure and his pride and the thought of being spoken to in such a way by a man one third his age made his face go beat red with anger.

"I am Gregory Jackson of the House of Lords and I will not be spoken to in such a way. Nor will I be ordered around and threatened by a mere child. Our business here is our own and does not concern you." This man obviously did not think Fred capable of carrying out his threat nor did he notice that it was by no means a threat, but a guarantee. Both Fred and Chris smirked for a moment before he replied.

"First, your name and title do not mean a damned thing to me. Secondly, you are out wandering the streets well after curfew which means you are either too stupid to care about such things like us, or you are Death Eaters, which is my concern. And finally, you were deliberately trying to sneak up on us from behind which only reinforces the possibility of you being Death Eaters and THAT, is most definitely my concern. So I repeat, what are you doing here?" Fred finished dangerously. As the pompous old nobleman was about to answer another from his group pushed forward and quickly silenced him.

As she lowered her hood, both Fred and Chris tried to figure out where they had seen this woman before. She wasn't all that remarkable in appearance being quiet short and her small frail looking hands were wrinkled with age but there was a veritable wildfire of determination and cunning in her eyes that intrigued both younger men. She was dressed in normal everyday clothing and if it were not for her eyes you would forget seeing her just minutes after, if you had even noticed her in the first place. They were both pulled from their thoughts however as the elderly woman began to speak.

"Gentlemen, I apologize for my companion's outburst. With all that has happened in the past several weeks I'm sure you can understand his short temper. You see we were coming this way when those men showed up and saw your successful ambush and we believe that you are just the right people that may be able to help us."

"Help you with what?" Chris asked cautiously but with a great deal of curiosity. Before she was given the opportunity to answer a gasp was heard from behind causing both wizards to quickly raise their wands as they spun around to face the new arrivals. However what they saw was not what they expected. They looked on in confusion as Katie, Lee, Major Tutsbury and his men standing in rigid with looks of absolute shock and disbelief on their faces. To say Fred was confused was an understatement. However his answer was quickly answered only to leave him even more confused and a great deal shocked.

"You Majesty!" The group chorused as they dropped to one knee.

They had been walking through the tunnels for over half an hour now and Fred still had a slightly dazed look on his face, a fact that brought a good deal of amusement to everyone else. They were all greatly surprised and thankful that neither the queen nor her companions complained about wading through the sewers before they reached their 'headquarters'. However all thoughts of their royal

companion were forgotten as they reached their large chamber to find it bustling with activity.

Everyone looked around in horror as the chamber was nearly full with wounded fighters and more and more were being brought in. Dozens sat on the floor or against the wall waiting to be treated as the most critical went first. The smell of fresh blood permeated the air as people ran this way and that trying to help as much as possible. Looking to the other side of the room Fred went pale as he saw Angelina Johnson lying on a makeshift table next to the fire place. Running towards his wounded friend the fear in his gut rose ten fold with every step he took.

“What happened?” He asked shakily to the army corpsman who was working on her wound. Without looking up or even pausing in his work the battlefield doctor answered as he quickly pointed to the table next to him where a young man lay unconscious.

“Jennings there was being held under that pain curse. You know, the one with the red light.” At Fred’s nod he continued. “Anyway while he was thrashing around his rifle was going off sporadically and one of the bullets caught her in the back.”

“She’s going to be alright, isn’t she?” He asked in a pleading tone. The doctor looked up and gave a small smile before answering.

“Yes, she should be fine. The bullet barely missed her spine and it punctured a lung but it was a clean in and out wound. Once I get the lead out of her one of those potions should do an excellent job.” Fred nodded thankfully to the man before moving away to help the other injured men and women.

“Alright what the hell happened?” George asked fiercely several hours later after everything died down. The twins along with their closest friends and all team leaders were sitting to discuss the happening of the night before. As a courtesy, the queen and her entourage were welcome to attend the meeting as well.

“Well one of two things happened, maybe even both. Either some of our people are getting sloppy or Commander Kull has been able to anticipate our movements and plans. Neither choice is very appealing.” Replied Sam Sharp, one of the many muggles now working with the twins and leader of team five. He was about thirty years old though his weary appearance made him look much older. “All of our ambushes went off fairly well, however our raids on their smaller camps and supply depots were a disaster. “My own team lost seven men the instant we arrived so clearly they were expecting at least some of our targets. But as the saying goes, ‘every cloak has a silver lining.’” He finished sadly as he slid a block of a plastic looking substance across the table to George.

“What is that?”

“That, Your Majesty, is C-4.” One of the Queen’s companions answered.

“Well you’re almost right. Lord Maul has altered this to multiply its destructive power. It’s capable of destroying just about anything as well as penetrate any magical ward.” Major Tutsbury explained before asking, “How much of this stuff did you

find?”

“That we know about they have at least five large crates of this shit. We also know that they have armed several small hand launched missals with the stuff. That was how we were able to escape. We were going to bring it back here to study but the need was there so we used it.” Sam concluded.

“Damn, we definitely need to pass this on to Neferatu we he gets here.” Fred muttered before turning to their ‘royal’ guests. “So what is it we can do for you Your Majesty?” He asked a bit nervously.

“Well we were able to get out of the palace several days ago while these ‘Death Eaters’ were ransacking through the north wing. We decided that our only choice was to try to make it to Hogwarts to speak with Headmaster Dumbledore. I was hoping that you could help us in that respect.” She finished in a calm tone but her eyes betrayed the urgency that was screaming to be let out. Many sat in surprise for a few moments before they realized that with her position she was well aware of the magical world and wasn’t all that surprised to hear that she knew Professor Dumbledore. When Lee composed himself he turned his sad eyes toward the new arrivals.

“Your Majesty, Professor Dumbledore was killed during an attack on Hogwarts last month.”

“What, how, who is in charge of the school now?”

“Right now Hogwarts is more of a military base and refugee camp than anything else. Harry Potter is in charge now and is trying to get everyone trained to help fight or at least defend themselves. As to how to get you to Hogwarts, I haven’t a clue.”

“Well Mr. Weasley, then it is a good thing I am here, now isn’t it.” A smooth voice drawled from behind Fred causing the young prankster jump and fall out of his chair. “You won’t get much work down there Mr. Weasley.” Neferatu said with amusement in his voice as Fred stood up grumbling to himself as he took his seat.

The next hour was spent passing information back and forth and making introductions. Her Majesty and her companions were quite shocked to learn that Neferatu was a vampire and were very nervous. However their nervousness changed back to shock again, and even a little awe, to learn he was also an elf.

“So how are we going to get her to Hogwarts? No offence meant Your Majesty but being a muggle at your age leaves apperation and the use of a portkey out of the question. Your body wouldn’t be able to take the strain.”

“No offence taken my dear boy.” She replied, nodding to Lee who seemed to be a bit nervous speaking to the Queen of the British Empire.

“That’s simple really, I will just create a portal and we can walk right through. We will be there in a matter of minutes.” Neferatu said.

“Now you wait just a damn minute. A wizard as powerful as Lord Maul, and

maybe even Commander Kull, could easily trace that magical signature right back here. I'm sure we are all in agreement that Her Majesty needs to get to Hogwarts as soon as possible, but I refuse to allow you to put the people in these tunnels at risk by doing so. Half of them are laid up as it is and are in no position to defend themselves if there were to be an attack here." George nearly screamed while thinking back to seeing his girlfriend lying on a makeshift table with a doctor trying to dig a bullet out of her back.

"Now that you have given your little 'it's all for the greater good speech' Mr. Weasley, shut up and listen. My portals are made from a much different form of magic than Mr. Longbottom's. Not even another elf could track another's portal. I assure you it is quite safe." Neferatu snapped back, his voice came out harsh and sharp due to the suggestion that HIS magic substandard and flawed in anyway. Elves had a great deal of pride in themselves same as humans and centaurs. Which, in retrospect, is probably why there is such a strained relationship between the three races.

"Oh, Sorry." George muttered as he suddenly found his lap very interesting.

"No need to apologize. It's impressive to see a man live through his emotions. But for now we must be off, I suggest the two of you come along." He said looking at the twins. Seeing their confused faces and knowing they were going to protest leaving their friends at that time he continued. "Your mother has been nearly hysterical since the first wave of attacks that supposedly killed you. She has been hounding me for information about you so I insist that you return to the castle for a few hours to set her at ease if nothing else." After several minutes and incessant nagging from all those in the 'room' Fred and George agreed to go. "Good, let's be going then.

"Your Majesty, how can we possibly trust these people? After all, they are sending us off with a vampire for god's sakes. These things kill our kind for our blood and now we are to trust one blindly." An old man whispered quickly and quietly, but not quiet enough, Mr. Ollivander, overheard and took offence. While Neferatu worked his magic the old wand maker interrupted the conversation.

"Neferatu may be a vampire but he is also an elf. Elves are second only to the phoenix in the large amounts of light magic that runs through their veins and as such it is spiritually, mentally and physically impossible for them to lie or mislead in anyway." He snapped fiercely. The old eccentric and the vampire had become quick friends which was not all that surprising given both of their very subtle ways at jabbing at someone to the point where they do not even realize they had been made fun of or joked about.

"Alright campers, let's go." Neferatu said before he vanished after walking through what looked to be a swirling ring of black water that had somehow been nailed to the wall. Seeing the apprehension of the muggles, Fred shook his head and walked through as well after grabbing several maps and pieces of parchment. It took a few minutes but George was able to convince them that no harm would come to them and they all entered the portal and began to quickly approach Hogwarts as the portal closed behind them.

The sight of fifteen people suddenly appearing on the Hogwarts grounds nearly sent dozens of people into a panic but seeing the twins with their tell tale flaming red hair put them at ease again, for the time being anyway. Looking around everyone was shocked to see several hundred people separated off into twenty to twenty five person groups as they received instruction on defensive and offensive techniques. Aurors, professors and even several students were leading these groups through their routines and Fred was astounded and slack-jawed to note that the group with the most skill appeared to be led by his baby brother.

“Oi, Ron!” Looking around to find the person seeking his attention he stood rigid for a moment as he spotted his brothers. After shaking his head several times he came to the obvious conclusion that his older brother truly were there, he sent his ‘students’ off to practice some more before making his way over to the twins, quickly.

“Oh Merlin, thank god you two are ok.” Ron ground out as he tried to fight back tears and held his brothers in a death grip.

“AIR!” The two forced out while their youngest brother had them thinking that he may have collapsed their lungs. When Ron finally broke up the embrace Fred and George nearly fell to the ground as oxygen rushed in to fill their lungs once again

“Mum will be thrilled that you have finally decided to come here. The only thing she has talked about more than her wish that you would come stay here is her pride in all that you were able to accomplish.” Ron finished with a grin. The twins looked at their little brother in shock. In the past Ron would have been furious at the possibility of being overshadowed once again by one of his brothers. Their shocked expressions quickly turned to looks of guilt as they thought about their mother and the hard time she must be having.

“We aren’t staying Ron. We only came by for a visit; we will be staying for only a couple of hours after the meeting that will no doubt be called. So we will be by to see mum and the rest of the family after we speak with Harry.” George replied sadly. Ron did not look happy about this but nodded just the same. He did not like having his brothers off where they could possibly be killed without anyone knowing of it and it just killed his mother, always wondering if her boys were still alive. However both Ron and Mrs. Weasley knew that what Fred and George were doing was necessary.

“Alright, I won’t say anything to mum so you could surprise her I guess but right now Harry is in the armory with his new apprentice.” Ron said with a wide smirk on his face.

“Apprentice?” The two asked in confusion which simply made Ron’s smile grow wider.

“Like I said Harry’s in the armory. I’m sure you will find it rather entertaining, I will see you later.” He finished with a salute and headed back to his students. As confusion and curiosity overtook them they quickly made their way inside.

“Your Majesty, perhaps I should warn you about Harry,” Fred began as they made their way into the dungeons on their way to the armory. “He is both the most powerful, most intelligent and one of the wisest people I have ever met, but he is a

little rough around the edges if you know what I mean. Don't get me wrong, I know he can be very diplomatic and formal if it is absolutely necessary but otherwise he is casual, direct and to the point. I don't mean to sound rude but while talking to him don't beat around the bush or throw half truths or lies his way, he WILL see through it and once you lose his respect you probably won't get it back." Fred trailed off as a loud clack, clack, clack could be heard echoing down the corridor. Taking off at top speed he reached the armory in no time and was quickly followed by everyone else. What they saw was shocking to say the least.

"Harry those books of yours are absolutely fabulous. Some of your theories on the makeup of our magical structure are simply groundbreaking if not controversial. I must say though that John Davies' theory on the first developments of magic was a bit realistic and believable than yours." Hermione looked worried that he might get mad about her doubts but Harry could hardly contain his laughter over her enthusiasm.

"Hermione, Davies' theory is a load of rubbish. The idea that magic developed due to simple evolution is pure fantasy. Bad written fantasy at that. I can tell you from first hand experience that magic was widely used at least by four thousand B.C. Now in the six thousand years since then the magical use in this world has decreased rather than increase. That would suggest the exact opposite wouldn't you think."

"So what, you think magic is dying out or something." Ron spoke up in amusement, clearly meaning for this statement to be a joke.

"Yes Ron that is exactly what I am saying." Harry replied seriously leaving his two companions horrified.

"But what do you think could be causing it?"

"People like the Malfoys. The vast majority of the old 'pureblood' families have died away in the last few hundred years because of their obsession with purity. Just like with the old noble families marrying relations to keep their nobility pure, this causes a problem with genetics. More and more squibs are being born every year to pureblood parents; some couples can't have children at all. Then of course you have wizards like Voldemort and Jericho who have wiped out more wizards and witches in the last twenty years than have died of old age." They sat in silence around Harry's fire for several moments before Harry spoke up again. "Well breakfast should be just about over so we better get busy. I have to start training Malfoy at nine o'clock and I believe you both have things to do."

"Harry why is it that you made him your apprentice anyway? I mean, Malfoy of all people." Ron said with a great amount of disgust.

"Because Ron, after that stunt in my dueling class last week there are plenty of people in this castle that are going to want to 'take care' of him. Especially the Aurors considering he used the killing curse. By making him my apprentice I'm preventing him from doing harm to other as well as keeping them from harming him. At the same time this leaves me with a lot of opportunity to see if I can change his beliefs on certain matters. Plus I get to kick him around a bit."

“But why even bother trying mate. He’s a lost cause.”

“Because I promised his mother that I would try. Let’s get going.” The three left Harry’s quarters in silence. Before splitting up down separate corridors Harry pulled Ron aside for a quick word.

“Ron, I just wanted to tell you that I am very proud of the progress you have made as well as the work you are doing training the others. Because of you they are quickly becoming among the best fighters in this school. Who knows, maybe after this war is over you will make a wonderful Defense against the dark arts teacher.” Harry said as he gave his friend a good squeeze on the shoulder before disappearing around the corner leave Ron with a dumbfounded look on his face. After a few moments he shook himself out of his stupor and a grin spread across his face as he thought of the praise his best friend gave him.

‘Today seems to be shaping up pretty well so far.’ He thought happily as he made his way out on to the grounds to begin training.

Nearly an hour later found Harry finishing up his warm-up exercises with the other heirs while they waited on Draco. Both Harry and Neville were working out bare chested while Ginny and Luna wore loose fitting sleeveless tunics. Clearly visible on each of their shoulders was a tattoo. Ginny’s, Neville’s and Luna’s were identical to the one that now resided on Draco Malfoy. Harry’s, however, was different.

On Harry’s shoulder there were three crossed blades with a red sun setting behind. This is the mark of his former master Forge, just as he himself was the master of his three companions. Right as the clock struck nine a very disgruntled looking Draco Malfoy walked into the room casting a weary eye at the other four occupants.

“Ah Draco, glad you could make it. Before we get started for the day I would like to explain a few things to you. Since you are now part of our little family my friends here will be helping out with your training whenever it may be needed...” Before he could continue Harry was interrupted when Malfoy scoffed loudly.

“Part of your family? You have got to be kidding me! I would rather die than have anything to do with you but unfortunately I had no say in the matter.” Draco ground out through clenched teeth, his eyes blazing with fury. Harry seemed not to take any notice of Draco’s tone and continued.

“Despite your wishes and hatred you are a part of a family now that is bound together by much stronger forces than by blood. As former apprentices of mine my friends here are your brother and sisters. I understand your reluctance and anger over this situation but you must understand that your apprenticeship is probably the only thing keeping many within these walls from killing you. The harder you work towards the goals I set for you the quicker you will finish your training and receive your own mark.”

“Mark? What mark?” Draco asked nervously. To answer his question both Harry and Neville turned around exposing their backs towards the young blond. On Harry’s back was a large phoenix that seemed to be an exact replica of the one on Draco’s

pale arm, only much larger. Standing out clearly on Neville's back was a massive dragon that seemed to be in flight while a great jet of flame erupted from its mouth. Draco simply stood there in awe at the near perfect artwork that created these marks. He was quickly pulled out of his stupor when the two men turned back to face him and Harry continued.

"Although we will always carry the mark of our first master when an apprentice has finished their training their own mark will simply appear across their back. The mark is always personal to the person carrying it and can never be removed since it is created by your own magic. And it is quite obvious that this mark will identify any apprentice you may one day have. Now let's get to work." Harry finished as he walked across the room to where he had two long wooden staffs leaning against the wall in the corner, leaving Draco standing in the center of the room with a pensive look on his face as Ginny, Luna and Neville left the armory un-noticed. After he retrieved the staffs he made his way back to stop just in front of his old school antagonist.

"Now as I told you last week, with your size and build you should go for speed, not strength. You will be working out a good deal to work on your flexibility and agility instead of muscle mass. Hand to hand combat will also help with that. For now though we are going to work on your stamina and a good way to do that is alternating activities for a while. We will start out with a mock duel with staffs. When I tell you to get down you will drop and start doing push ups until I tell you to flip over, then you will go on to sit ups. After that you will stand back up and we will duel again. Every time we run this drill it will go on longer. To reach your full potential you must reach your limits and surpass them. So you will keep going until you throw up everything in your stomach then you will begin again. Now, defend yourself!" Harry barked as he lunged at Draco with his staff, raining blows down on the younger boy in a frenzy of movement. Harry was careful not to hurt the boy too bad so most of his strikes could be blocked if Draco moved quick enough but he had to land at least a few to get his point across that he had to learn as soon as possible because Harry would not take it easy on him.

It wasn't that long before Draco was completely exhausted but Harry didn't seem to care as he drove him on further and further until about an hour after beginning Harry decided that Draco had had enough so he ended this session by landing four hard strikes to Draco's body with his staff before giving the young man a pain relieving potion and sending him to his dormitory to rest. As Malfoy was hobbling out of the armory Harry realized that they had a bit of an audience when he spotted Fred, George and a few others crowded around the door with shocked expressions on their faces.

"Something I can help you with gentlemen?" Harry asked with a grin effectively snapping his watchers out of their daze.

"Harry, I know that Malfoy is a real git but was that really necessary?" Fred asked uncertainly.

"Yes Fred, it was. Any fool can teach someone to defend themselves if they are given the time needed to do it. We, however, do not have that time. Those welts on his body are going to encourage him to try harder ten times better than false praise on

how well he's progressing."

"True enough!"

"So what can I do for you? What are you doing here anyway?" Harry asked with a confused expression crossing his face.

"I suggest you call a meeting..." Fred began.

"We have a lot to discuss." George finished in a serious tone.

Chapter Twenty Seven: Of Peg Legs and Betrayal

"If the two of you are smart, the first thing you will do will be to go and see your mother." Harry said as he followed the two out of the dungeons while pulling his shirt on over his head. "She has been hassling me for weeks to pull you to out of London and bring you here. She has been beside herself with worry."

"That is precisely why we can't see her yet. If she sees us before the meeting starts we will not be able to get anything done. Whereas if she first saw us when we give our report then we will be able to stress the importance of our information and get her to calm down for a bit." Harry could only nod in understanding to Fred's conclusion.

"So how bad is it and who are your companions here?" He asked gravely as they were approaching the gargoyle guarding Professor McGonagall's office. George, who obviously had just remembered who was accompanying them, turned to Harry with a mischievous grin flashing across his face and the only thing Harry could think at the moment were two simple words. 'Ah hell.'

"My Lord, may I present to you Her Royal Majesty Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, head of the commonwealth, defender of the faith." George said with a flourish. Not two seconds later Fred finished up the introductions.

"Your Majesty, this is Lord Harry Potter, Lord of the Phoenix, leader of the army of the light, Heir of Salazar Slytherin, Godric Gryffindor and Merlin. And on the rare occasion, the Angel of Death." Fred was suddenly cut off when Harry slapped him upside the back of his head.

"Knock it off and keep your mouth shut. Your flare for the dramatic is going to get you in some serious trouble one of these days." He growled before nodding his head to the Queen Elizabeth, "Your Majesty." He greeted politely, which she returned, before giving the pass word and making his way up the staircase to the Headmistress's office while Fred and George followed, giggling like school girls.

Fred's theory concerning their mum's actions proved to be 100% correct. The moment she entered the Hall of the Phoenix she made a beeline straight for them with tears rolling down her cheeks and hasn't let go since. Everyone was very surprised and even more pleased to see twins alive and well but they were even more shocked

to learn that the Queen of England herself had joined them. After everyone had taken their seats, Mrs. Weasley was sitting in between Fred and George with a vise like grip on both of them as if she were afraid they would disappear on her, Harry began the meeting.

“Your Majesty, since you obviously went through a lot of trouble getting here, may I ask what it is you that we can help you with?”

“Thank you Mr. Potter.” She began as she stood up surveying all those around her. “The reason for my visit is rather simple and at the same time complicated. You see when I am finished here I fully intend to return to London to try all in my power to meet this threat but at the same time I have a responsibility to ensure that the royal line goes on. Before the attacks had begun my husband, son and grandchildren were on holiday Edinburgh, we have had no word from them since. So I have come to beg for your assistance.” She finished with a hard and determined voice but her eyes gave away her desperation and anxiety.

“Forge?”

“I’m on it Harry.” He replied quickly before vanishing.

“Your Majesty, Edinburgh fell two weeks ago but if they are still alive Forge will find them in a matter of minutes.” Before Her Majesty could reply Forge had already returned.

“Minutes? I’m much quicker than that Potter.” Forge snapped out with an insulted tone before he turned to the Queen. “I apologize Your Majesty, but you’re Husband and son as well as Prince William were executed after they were captured while Edinburgh was under siege. However, Prince Harry managed to escape and believe it or not he is on his way here with a band of refugees. They should arrive by mid-afternoon.” Before he knew it Forge was wrapped in a fierce hug that rivaled any Mrs. Weasley had ever given.

“Thank you, thank you my dear boy.” She sobbed out as she disentangled herself and reclaimed her seat.

“Ok, well through our raids and spying we have managed to get a rough idea of where most of the Death Eater encampments are as well as their supply depots.” George began as he pulled out several maps and spread them across the table. “From what we know there are at least four thousand Death Eaters concentrated in London and the surrounding areas with more and more being brought in every week.” At this point Fred took over.

“All of their camps are relatively lightly defended, with the exception of this one here by the docks.” He said while pointing to the map. “Regular surveillance has given us a fairly good idea about their outer defenses, so for the last week we have been sending one or two men in each day to see what they could dig up.”

“How are they getting in if it is defended as well as you say.” Luna asked while everyone looked curious to know the answer themselves causing the twins to grin

wickedly. With a flourish Fred produced a small device from his pocket.

“With these!” He said simply as he pressed a button and vanished, causing gasps around the hall. “We finished designing this little beauty last week. With one you can move around at will and not even any protective wards will detect you. The one big problem with them however is that if you perform magic while using it, it will shut down leaving you exposed.” He explained after reappearing. “But for now, back to business.”

For the next few hours Fred and George gave Harry and the others an update on the progress, or lack of progress, of their operations in London and that of their contacts in other nearby countries. Everyone was quite surprised to hear just how much their operations had grown, not to mention how easily their muggle partners had adapted to the magical aspects of life. Unfortunately Fleur had contacted them with news that Beauxbatons was near to being totally over run. Harry quickly sent Neville and Luna to strengthen the wards of the French school of magic and help repair and build any defenses that may be needed.

“We’ll be back in a few days.” Neville said before the two vanished from sight.”

Everyone was very pleased to hear the progress the Americans had made after their president had dismissed all government officials that had been working against them by trying to reach a peace settlement with the Death Eaters. Since that time the attacks had been on a decrease and their military working with Aurors have made great progress even though they are still on the defensive and there are not many safe havens left in the country.

“This brings us to a much more serious matter.” Fred began with a worried expression marring his young features. “With a near world wide campaign going it is obvious that Lord Maul cannot command all of his forces at once, so instead he has appointed his strongest followers to the task giving them each control of certain areas world wide. Each one of these men and women are as evil and twisted as Voldemort ever was but not as powerful, not yet. This was first brought to our attention while one of our men was scouting out that camp on the docks.” Fred stopped at this point and George took over.

“We learned that Lord Maul himself would be there for a meeting with his most loyal followers the following night so we sent twelve men in to observe that meeting. Each one of these people had been rising dark lords throughout the world for the last few years. If it Voldemort had not been so intent on killing Harry he would have definitely gone after them to eliminate the competition.” Fred now took over again.

“The most powerful among them goes by the name Commander Kull; he is now in complete command of the Death Eater forces here in the British Isles. After crushing the opposition in Ireland nearly completely he moved his base to London to mop up there. Since then we have been having an increasing difficult time with our operations. Our raids and surveillance teams have suffered significant injuries and casualties. Our ambushes are stilling seeing great success but it is only a matter of time before that changes as well. Kull is not a man who makes the same mistake repeatedly, he is a brilliant strategist and absolutely ruthless.”

“If these Death Eaters are that important why didn’t you at least try to kill as many as you could while you were spying on that meeting?” Snape asked with a sneer and Harry could see that many others in the room were wondering the same thing. However the twins were glaring at the potions master with venom in their eyes.

“Tell me Snape, why didn’t you simply kill Voldemort? After all you were alone with him many times over the years while you were spying on him for Dumbledore. The fact is you couldn’t beat him, no matter how hard you tried he would still kill you. You expect the two of us and ten others to deal with more than twenty witches and wizards just like him. Lord Maul himself was also there. Unlike most of you we have seen him use his magic, we have seen how powerful he really is. Let’s not forget that he was able to easily kill Dumbledore without him even knowing he was there. If you expect us to even send ALL of our people into that room to fight those people you are crazy and just plain stupid.” Everyone was sitting in shock at George’s outburst, however Mr. and Mrs. Weasley looked on in pride. No one could believe that these were the same Weasley twins that constantly pulled pranks and made jokes.

Snape looked absolutely furious at being spoken to in such a manner but was unable to make any comment himself as those sitting towards the back of the hall jumped up and began screaming. Being in the Hall of the Phoenix, Harry knew that there was no real danger so he stood calmly to see what was causing the commotion. What he saw was not something he expected.

“Courage!” Harry exclaimed in surprise as the large griffin quickly ran to Harry’s side while ignoring all those around him.

“My Lord!” The half eagle half lion began as he skidded to a halt in front of Harry. “We have been betrayed.” He said with a furious growl, causing many to back further away in fear.

“What? What happened?” Harry shouted, completely ignoring the interested looks of his friends and the frightened, yet awed, looks the queen and her companions were giving him and his griffin friend.

“The Acromantula My Lord, the have joined with the dark one. The centaurs and my colony have engaged them in battle and it rages as we speak.” That was all Harry need to hear before he jumped in to action.

“Weasleys and Marauders with me. Molly I you and everyone else take up defensive positions around the castle and along the battlements. Your Majesty, remain here until we have determined that it is safe. Meeting adjourned.” He shouted before charging down the corridor with Courage at his side and his friends and family behind him trying to keep up.

“So what the hell happened?” Harry asked as he ran. He found it difficult to believe that Aragog would side against Hagrid. It just didn’t make any sense, however his question was quickly answered.

“The Dark One approached them with an offer of allegiance, we do not know what this offer entailed but Aragog turned it down and refused. Last night he and his

mate were attacked and killed by many of the younger and more eager of the colony. After killing most of Aragog's oldest children there was no more resistance and they took control of the whole colony and joined with the Dark One. We learned of this just in time to intervene before they could attack the unicorns in their glade, that is where the fight is currently raging."

"Thank you my friend. Go on ahead I will follow quickly with my friends." Harry said as they arrived in McGonagall's office. Courage quickly jumped out the window, flying towards the Forbidden Forest just as the Marauders and the Weasley men were carried up into the office by a swarm of phoenixes.

"Harry, what's going on?" Fred asked as he attempted to catch his breath.

"Aragog has been killed and the Acromantula have turned against us. The centaurs and griffins are battling them now as we speak and we are going to help. Ginny and I will apperate the lot of you there with us since you are among the strongest fighters we have, so lets go." Harry finished quickly as he ignored how pale Ron had gone but he still had a determined look about him. Just before they vanished Harry heard the distinctive sound of Ron extending the blades on his leather gauntlet and smiled as he thought to himself. 'At least he can see passed his fear and concentrate on the situation at hand'.

When they arrived in the forest they found madness, pure chaos raging all around them. All around them the dead and wounded lay in pools of blood that stained the sacred and pure grounds of the unicorn's glade. The sounds of war echoed all around them as the out numbered forces of griffins and centaurs clashed with the hundreds of giant spiders that surrounded them.

"Fred, George, Bill and Sirius I want you and Ginny to hit from the left while Arthur, Charlie, Ron, Remus, Peter and I will go to the right. Hit hard and fast with explosion hexes and bludgeoning charms to make your way through to the centaurs as fast as possible. Lets go." The two groups spread out and quickly began firing curses into the mass of spiders causing many explosions within their ranks sending many flying through the air.

Upon hearing the sound of curses flying the centaurs and griffins began fighting with renewed vigor and ferocity. Harry had drawn the sword of Godric Gryffindor and began hacking his way through the crowd with Ron at his side slashing from side to side with his 'claws' while casting curses with his other hand.

While 'hacking' her way through the horde of arachnids, Ginny spun on her heel, sensing a hostile presence behind her. A flash of light cut through the air as she swung her blade outward only to pull it to an immediate stop upon seeing Magorian with a dead spider at his feet. Ginny gave a quick nod of gratitude and prepared to return to the fight when a sharp scream of pain ripped through the air. She quickly turned to her right in time to see Peter being lifted violently off the ground, his left leg clamped firmly in the pincers of a rather young, but large, looking acromantula. Reacting fast, she began to charge her way towards the pair with several options for dealing with the situation passing through her mind. She decided on the more direct and confrontational approach. In other words, messy.

Running at full speed she ate up the distance between them swiftly and effortlessly. With a quick strike the two front most legs of the beast were separated from its body. With a shrill cry of outrage and pain Peter was dropped roughly to the ground as the spider slumped to the ground, trying desperately to stand once again. Within seconds Remus had arrived just as Ginny was preparing to 'dispatch' their enemy. He quickly moved to check on his friend who was still grunting out loud. Upon examining the wound Remus could understand and was actually quite shocked that he was handling the pain that well. He was startled out of his thought as Ginny began speaking.

"Here take this portkey back to Hogwarts. It will take you directly to the hospital wing. Hopefully Madam Pomfrey can save that leg." She began before surveying to scene in front of her where most of the acromantula began to retreat. "After you get him there go find Snape and Hermione and bring them here." Remus nodded quickly before activating the portkey and disappearing with a pop.

It was not long before the rest of the enemy were chased off and an accurate assessment of the situation could be gathered. Needless to say, it was not good. The dead and wounded of enemy and ally alike lay on the matted red stained ground. They had only been in the fight for ten minutes or so and Ginny had no idea how long it had lasted before they arrived. Then she couldn't help but think if things would have been different if they had gotten there quicker somehow.

"It will not do to dwell on such questions my dear." A wise voice spoke up from beside her. Looking quickly she realized that it was merely Bane and that she had nothing to fear from him.

"And what question is that?" She asked feigning ignorance while hoping that he would not notice and believe he had been wrong in his observation.

"You were asking yourself what all ask in times such as these. Two simple words and yet so terrible. The question 'what if' is one that can never be answered. Not even by those of us with sight beyond that of normal reality. No one will ever find the answer and yet we still ask the question, still seek that which is unobtainable." Bane said solemnly.

"So the centaurs still ask as well?" Ginny asked curiously. She had never really had a very productive conversation with a centaur before and was really surprised by the great thought and wisdom that had obviously gone into his explanations and answers to her questions.

"Oh yes. It seems that since we began reading the heavens we have asked that question several times a day at least. Going over in our minds how certain things could have been different if we simply imparted our knowledge of events to certain parties effected. But that was forbidden." Bane finished sadly before he walk off to help his wounded brothers as Harry had just gotten out his potions chamber and Professor Snape as well as Hermione and many others had arrived to help with the wounded.

"So did things turn out over all?" Professor McGonagall asked when Harry

joined her in her office after leaving the forest several hours later. Taking a deep breath and letting out a long sigh Harry answered.

“Well two griffins were killed, the other sixteen, including Courage all had many minor wounds that would have easily healed over time however I talked them into allowing us to heal them incase there was another incident so they would be one hundred percent when the time came to fight. All in all they made it out of this fight in pretty good shape. However six centaurs were killed including Firenze. There are twelve wounded severely and many that are simply banged up pretty bad. And then we have Peter.” Harry stopped for a moment to take a dramatic pause as amusement with obvious worry danced across his face.

“Well Madam Pomfrey informed Peter that he would be in the hospital wing for quite some time since his leg was nearly ripped off and he would never regain full use of it. Obviously he found three months of bed rest and only partial use of the leg for his troubles ridiculous. He immediately demanded that she remove the ‘worthless stump’, slap a peg leg on him and let him go back to work.” Harry said while he chuckled, thinking back to the look on Madam Pomfrey’s face. McGonagall however did not see the humor in it as her lips were drawn into a thin line that clearly said that she did not believe that to be a viable option.

“Well I hope YOU were able to talk him out of such a rash decision.”

“Hell no! I agree with him. I’d go crazy as well in that situation.” Harry had to quickly cut McGonagall off before she could reply so he could get his point across. “Minerva, look at it from his point of view. Even after spending three months in bed, which even by its self isn’t that appealing, he will never have complete use of that leg again. He’ll be walking around on crutches for the rest of his life.

He can have it this way or he could spend a few days in the hospital wing for observation and come out with a perfectly functioning NEW leg.” Harry finished with a smirk.

“What are you talking about? I have never heard of a spell that could grow someone a new limb.” McGonagall demanded sharply.

“For shame Headmistress. Have you forgotten the ‘fake’ Peter and his new hand?” Harry asked with a grin. After a few moments thought McGonagall’s eyes widened and her mouth dropped open.

“Are you saying that you preformed the same spell on Mr. Pettigrew?” Her shocked and horrified voice rang throughout the office.

“No, not the same spell. Not exactly. I took the original spell and altered it a bit to suit me so the spell is now more ‘potent’ than it was before. There was no dangerous magic involved and the leg looks, feels and functions just as the original did. I guess you could say it is an upgraded version. I offered to do the same for Moody but he seems to like his peg leg. He says it adds a whole new intimidation factor and I can see his point I guess.”

The rest of the day had past relatively quickly. As Forge had promised, a group of about fifty seven refugees, comprised of both wizards and muggles, arrived later that day and Prince Harry was among them which made the queen cry out in joy and rush to her grandson. Her majesty had made it quite clear that she would be returning to London that night with the twins but it was decided that Prince Harry would remain at Hogwarts for the time being.

Early the next morning Harry was in the armory training with Draco once again. The young Slytherin was standing in the center of the room panting heavily while extending a half staff out in front of him as if it were a sword. By the look on his face you would be led to believe that the thing was pretty heavy. And you would be right.

“Right now Malfoy that staff weighs twice as much as my own battle ax. Every morning it will slowly get heavier so that you don’t get too used to the weight. Now tell me Malfoy, if you were to see three men fighting, one was fast, one was strong and one was smart, who would you bet on.” Harry asked as if he were lecturing to a class.

Trying to ignore the pain biting in to his arms shoulders and chest, Malfoy thought back to his confrontation with Harry in the dueling meeting the other night as well as his lesson the day before when Harry had beaten him so easily because he was much faster. “The fastest.”

“And why would that be?” Harry asked calmly as he circled his apprentice. Malfoy’s face had contorted for a few moments as if he were about to scream out from the pain but he quickly subdued it. However he was finding it much harder to concentrate on the questions long enough to come up with some semblance of a coherent answer. “Come on Malfoy, think. Ignore the pain and answer the question. If you can’t think through pain then you are as good as dead. Now, why would the fastest win? What advantages does speed have over the other two traits?”

“He’s faster.” He mumbled as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. Harry merely frowned in disappointment at the answer but decided to try another approach.

“A fighter is only as slow as he thinks he is and is only as fast as he can think.” This statement through Malfoy off guard causing him to nearly drop the staff as he mumble something through his clenched teeth. Although distorted by the strain Harry still understood the words spoken.

“It means precisely what I said. A man, no matter how competent he may be is only as good as he believes he can be. However you can only be as fast as you can think. Or at least as fast with any accuracy or skill. What I mean by that is simple. Any fool can pick up a sword and wave it around in some speedy fashion that he thinks is some impressive display. However to make that speed work for you, you must be able to learn to anticipate you opponents moves and make them work for you by knowing ahead of time what you are going to need to do to counter your opponents next move.” By this time Harry had noticed that Draco had seemed to forget all about the staff in his hand and the pain it was causing him and had his attention full on Harry. Telling him to put the staff down seemed to bring all that pain back and Draco

quickly slumped against the wall with his head resting on his arms.

“From now until I tell you otherwise you will not ‘participate’ in any of the classes still offered here. Instead you will go to every class available for defensive techniques and simply observe. I want you to learn about the mechanics of the human body and this is the best way at the moment. I want you to pay particular attention to the way people move while dueling either hand to hand, with swords or wands. This is a good way for you to be able to anticipate an opponents moves so pay special attention to their different stances and moves and think of all the possible counter moves and offensive strikes you can. Well that’s about it for now so go rest up and meet me back down here at four o’clock this afternoon.” Harry finished brightly as he walked out of the room. Draco merely groaned and put his head back down.

“So how is your mother handling your brothers leaving again?” Harry asked Ginny as they were sitting in her quarters after lunch.

“Not very well I’m afraid.” She answered with a sigh as she leaned against him while staring into the fire. “She knows that they need to be in London and the pride she feels for them is enormous but she is also terrified that they will get themselves killed. She won’t admit it but I believe that she wishes Fred and George were still the same irresponsible jokers they had been before. And now Bill has joined them. I don’t think she could handle losing another of her children. But enough of that, how is Peter doing?” Harry smiled slightly at her quick change of subject.

“He’s doing fine. He’s a little upset about having to remain in the hospital wing for a few days but he has adjusted well. Although his leg looks, feels and reacts just like a normal one it will take a little while to get used to the fact that it is artificial. Much better than a peg leg though.” Harry said with a chuckle.

“Have you heard from Neville yet?”

“No, all his concentration will have to be on Beauxbatons’ wards so I probably won’t hear from him until they are finished.” He answered absently causing Ginny to giggle.

“He’s going to be fairly upset that he missed another fight.” Harry laughed out loud before closing off his mind and leaning into give Ginny a passionate kissed which she returned readily.

Unknowingly to Harry and Ginny, they were both wrong. Neville was not concentrating on the wards nor would he be upset over missing a minor fight. After all, he had his own battle unfolding before him. From his position atop one of the five towers the school housed Neville and Luna watched as giants, trolls and goblin mercenaries lined up along the far edge of the prim and proper gardens that surrounded the school. Neville looked around at the layout design and overall construction of the school and scoffed. This castle was built nearly one thousand years ago, during the so called dark ages. It was almost as old as Hogwarts. Yet the walls were low and thin, there were no battlements from which you could defend and there were no other defenses to speak of. The place had obvious been built more for visual effect and beauty than any practical use. Without the magical wards at their strongest

this place was about as defensible as an outhouse.

“FRENCH.” Neville growled as he turned around and headed back down the stairs with Luna at his side.

Chapter Twenty Eight: Harry vs. Neville

Neville was not in the best of moods as he stalked through the corridors of the nearly ancient castle/school of Beauxbatons. He walked at a fast pace towards the entrance hall with sword in hand, hair flying behind him and his face set in stone as students, teachers and Aurors alike scrambled to get out of his way. After coming down from the tower Neville immediately sent Luna off to the observatory to work on the wards. The night before they were able to rebuild the anti-apparition wards and anti-portkey wards that had been almost completely devastated. They had spent the better part of the night and early morning repairing the damage done to the school itself. Until the enemy was spotted anyway.

“Madam Maxime!” He called out as he entered the hall. The Beauxbatons Headmistress was standing among a large group of very nervous teachers and students trying to think of what they should do. Beside the sporadic attacks against their wards and a single attack that damaged part of the school, she had no experience with this sort of thing. In neither situation was a counterattack launched. So naturally she was very relieved when Neville arrived.

“We are going to need someone to cover the windows and attack from there, preferably the fourth years and lower. Everyone else, Aurors, teachers, parents and ministry personnel included needs to spread out along the outer walls facing north and east. As thin as those walls are it won’t take much pounding from those trolls and giants to break through.”

“Giants and trolls?” Madam Maxime gasped. “What else did you see?”

“So far it looks like that’s about it aside from some goblin mercenaries. There are about ten Giants, twelve trolls and fifty goblins.”

“No Death Eaters? Why would he attack a target like Beauxbatons without them?” A man that Neville knew to be the French Minister of Magic, Pierre Reno asked. Neville had been asking himself that very question since he first saw the ‘army’ from atop the tower twenty minutes before. And he was left with just one conclusion.

“Their playing with us.” Upon seeing the confused looks he was receiving, he explained. “For the last two weeks they have been slowly wearing down your defenses. Battering at the wards every night and then retreating. Then they start working on the structure of the school itself. The giants and trolls smashed many holes into the walls large enough for a man to get through, but why then did the Death Eaters not attack.”

“I see what you’re getting at,” One of the Aurors spoke up. “By hitting us like this they are wearing us down. Trying to break us.” Neville smiled approvingly and followed it up with a question of his own.

“And the point of that would be to do what?” After a few moments he knew that no one knew the answer so he continued. “They pulled the giants and trolls away from the school for a reason. Their purpose was never to get inside but to break you’re spirits. When they finally do enter the castle they want the least amount of fighting as possible.”

“But why would that be? From what I have heard Lord Maul does not care whether he loses some of his followers so why keep the fighting to a minimum?”

“Simple really, you’re right he doesn’t care about his followers but he obviously cares about something else. Something that is in this school.”

“What could he be looking for in this school?” Asked a very confused Auror. Neville could not help but look confused himself while he thought of all the possibilities.

“I have no idea but right now that is the least of our worries. Like I said, I want all of the forth years and below stationed at the windows. When they begin to advance towards the school I want you to rain explosion hexes down on them. Everyone else spread out.” Everyone began moving down one corridor or another while Neville, Madam Maxime, Fleur Delacour and about twenty others remained in the large entrance hall facing the massive intricately carved double doors that could soon be nothing but a memory. After a few long moments of silence the ground started to shake as the trolls and giants furiously beat their clubs about the ground in anticipation of the coming fight.

“Mr. Longbottom do you believe the girl, Miss Lovegood is powerful enough to repair the wards fully in such a short time.” Minister Reno asked nervously.

“First of all Minister, Luna is a woman, not a girl, you call her a girl and she’ll pop your figs. Secondly, no one, not even Harry or myself is strong enough to repair and strengthen all of the wards that are this complicated and powerful fully on our own. What she is doing is simply restoring and strengthening the most crucial wards by diverting power from the others that are not needed at this time. Now get ready, they should be coming some enough.”

True to Neville’s word, not ten minutes later the walls began to tremble under the force of massive clubs attempting to batter the place down. In a detached sort of way Neville felt a great deal of pride at how the walls were holding up under the onslaught due to the shields he had erected after rebuilding the sections that had already collapsed.

“If they get through use a conjunctive hex on the trolls, they are easily confused so with luck it maybe possible they will turn on their own allies.” Fleur announced.

“Damn good thinking.” Neville said just before the doors began to splinter. Throughout the castle the walls began to become increasingly unstable and the unease had grown to a fevered pitch.

“Explosion hexes NOW!” He ordered loudly just before the door and its

supporting wall fell, blowing the door and most of the supporting wall outward. The result was total destruction and carnage. It appeared that goblins were standing in between the giants that had been battering the doors, waiting for them to fall so they could enter immediately and take the castle's residents in some manner of surprise. The blast had sent the goblins and a few of the giants flying back with large pieces of stone and wood shooting towards them at an accelerated rate, ripping into the flesh of their attackers.

"My god!" A young Auror exclaimed, catching Neville's attention.

"I don't know what you thought would happen here but if you are not prepared to kill perhaps you should not be here." He snapped before launching a barrage of wandless bludgeoning charms into the throng of giants that were still on their feet. The meaning and tone of Neville's words sank in deep to all those present and it wasn't long before they joined him in advancing against the enemy.

From her position atop the observatory Luna worked at a frantic pace to pour some extra power into the remaining wards. She had already completely sapped the power for the anti-muggle wards and several others that really had no place now that the magical world had been exposed. Diverting power to different wards is a short but arduous process and when she was finished she really felt that she could use a nap. Looking down at the grounds below she surveyed the situation before collecting herself to join the fight. However something else caught her eye.

Moving away from the school at a fast pace were five figures dressed in the pale blue robes of Beauxbatons students. Upon closer look she could tell that two of the students were carrying something between them and it appeared that they had exited the school from a secret passage and were heading towards the wooded area that lay beyond the gardens. Curiosity getting the better of her she quickly transfigured herself into a falcon and began the pursuit. Reaching the cover of trees she settled herself onto a branch and took a look around. The only notable find was three men standing in the shadows at the edge of a clearing. The blood red robes easily gave them away as Death Eaters but from what she could tell they were the only ones in the area. A few moments later the five students entered the clearing and approached the Death Eaters in a timid manner.

"Have you brought what we asked for?" A harsh voice rang out.

"We have." A young man of about sixteen answered as he removed the velvet rapping from around what Luna could now see was a long golden spear. The Death Eater quickly snatched the spear from his hands and was looking at it with a sort of deep longing.

"My master will reward me greatly for this."

"And what of us? You said we would be able to see our families again if we brought you that spear."

"And so you shall." The Death Eater answered as he and his two companions raised their wands simultaneously. "Avada Kedavra!" They cried in unison as five

faces went white with unimaginable fear. Luna acted fast and apperated herself quickly between the students and Death Eaters where she swiftly drew her sword and used it to deflect the deadly curses. Unfortunately while three were stopped, two got by and a single thump could easily be heard behind her. Death Eaters, ever the cowards, vanished the moment Luna had arrived, taking their prize with them.

“Stay here and out of sight!” Luna snapped in a cold voice before she changed back into a falcon and made her way back towards the fight with wings beating ferociously. Spotting Neville fighting fiercely side by side with Fleur Delacour outside of the castle walls, Luna quickly went into a dive and landed right beside them and began launching curses of her own.

“Have you been able to get a hold of Harry yet?” She asked.

“No, not yet.” He replied simply. “He has had his mind closed off since about three o’clock yesterday afternoon so I have been unable to get any kind of response.”

“That dumb son of a bitch. He knows he’s the only telepath we know, it’s not like we can call someone else and he should know better.” Luna responded bitterly as she run her blade into the abdomen of a nearby giant. A sudden roar of noise brought their attention away from Harry’s stupidity for the time being and pulled it to their left where a group of trolls and goblins were heading towards them with many of the Beauxbatons staff and students right behind them.

“Conjunctive hexes on three!” Fleur cried. “Ah the hell with it, THREE!” She yelled and a mass of curses went flying towards the large lumbering creatures but only one found its mark. Taking a conjunctive hex to the eyes brought chaos to the creature’s simple mind. In its pain and confusion he began to swing his club around wildly, scattering many of the goblins that still remained in the fight and sparking an impromptu wrestling match between a giant and a troll. The cursed troll however was still on his feet and swinging his massive club as he charged towards the waiting defenders.

Neville, who was ready to strike down the few remaining goblins, was deeply surprised when he quickly found himself being thrown to the ground. He did however look up just in time to see Fleur being launched through the air from a powerful swing of a giant’s club. The next thing he saw was everything go red.

Harry lay warm in his bed for quite some time after actually waking, refusing even to open his eyes for fear that the details of the previous nights dream would be lost to him forever. He had known for many years now that he was in love with Ginny but this was the first time he had dreamt of her in a provocative manner. He didn’t know weather to be excited or ashamed. He was startled of these thoughts however when a firm but slender arm draped itself across his chest. Harry looked to his right just in time to catch Ginny’s lips with his own.

“Morning sleepy head.” She said impishly at his startled expression. Harry felt his jaw go slack as the memories of the previous night returned and realized that it had been no dream. He was saved from speaking however as a high pitched squawk echoed through the room. The pair shot up in bed and looked around for the source.

“Harry, how did that eagle get into my room?” Ginny asked in confusion. It took Harry several moments before he realized where the bird had come from.

“It’s the Malfoy’s eagle, I keyed it in to the wards so it could get to me where ever I am.” He said quickly as he jumped out of bed and rushed to the table where the eagle had sat. In his haste he overlooked the fact that he was still naked. A fact that made Ginny go red with embarrassment.

“SHIT! That foolish woman.” With a quick wave of his hand Harry was now dressed for battle and he secured his weapons to him firmly. “Ginny get out to Malfoy Manor and bring Mrs. Malfoy here. Then get to Beauxbatons to help as fast as you can.” And with that Harry vanished. Reading the note, Ginny swore herself and in no time she was ready and she left herself.

When Harry appeared on the grounds of Beauxbatons he found absolute chaos. The fighting for the most part was over but the aftermath however was more disorganized as any battle could be. The beautiful gardens surrounding the school were scorched black with fires still blazing in certain areas. He could see many crying over the bodies of the dead and wounded alike, no one was attempting to help the wounded. Everyone just stood around with looks of shock on their faces gazing around at the once pristine school.

“SNAP OUT OF IT!” Harry roared, gaining the attention of everyone around. “If you haven’t noticed there are wounded people that need attention, get to it before the die. NOW!” Everyone jumped into action at once and began moving quickly through the crowds, rounding up the wounded and bringing them inside. Harry quickly located Luna and made his way to her as she leaned over a still body. When he came closer he realized that the body was that of Fleur Delacour.

“Is she going to be alright?” Harry asked in a worried tone. Luna however was looking straight ahead.

“I have done what I can, I going to take her to Madam Pomfrey, the mediwitch here has enough to deal with and Pomfrey is one of the best, then I’ll come back here. Now that you are here you get to deal with him. After a hit her with its club he lost it.” She said as she pointed out in front of her. Looking to where she was pointing Harry grimaced.

“Oh crap.”

Using shields Neville had cornered and trapped the last of the enemy on the far side of the grounds and he was slowly slaughtering them. After handing Luna a portkey and taking a quick breath Harry got to his feet and ran swiftly towards his friend. At the moment Neville was going toe to toe with one of the two remaining giants while the goblins huddled together behind, shaking with terror. Neville dispatched his opponent quite easily and was advancing on the final giant when suddenly he was knocked to the ground. Quickly regaining his footing Neville looked up into the eyes of Harry Potter.

Never taking his eyes off Neville, Harry threw out his left arm and the seven

remaining goblins were thrown to the ground in an unconscious heap.

“Get out of my way Harry!” Neville growled.

“Not a chance in hell. The fight is over, killing them now would make you no better than them.”

“This from the man who took no prisoners when Voldemort attacked Hogwarts.” He replied scathingly. Harry however was unfazed.

“I killed no one that was trying to surrender or escape. The Dementors and Acromantula on the other hand is a different story entirely. Now, do you want to face a real opponent or would you prefer to go back to Hogwarts and see how Fleur is doing.” Harry thanked his lucky stars when look in Neville’s eyes changed dramatically. It was a shot in the dark but the fact that he had snapped after seeing Fleur being hit suggested that more went on than just repairing defenses while he was here. With a quick nod of his head Neville vanished followed closely by Harry.

Inside the hospital wing Madam Pomfrey was bustling with activity. She had patched Fleur up with some help from Luna and was now preparing different potions and instruments as she readied herself to head to Beauxbatons with Luna. Harry waited in the doorway until the two women vanished before walking silently over to the bed Fleur occupied with Neville sitting in a chair beside her. For ten silent minutes Harry merely stood at the foot of the bed before speaking as if he were lecturing a class.

“Fifty goblins, ten giants and twelve trolls, aside from one giant and seven goblins, they are all dead. Of the defenders of Beauxbatons there was only one seriously wounded and apparently she is doing quite fine. You have been in many worse situations than that and not loose control, so what happened?” After a few moments Harry was about to speak again when Neville answered.

“She is here because of me.” He answered in a cracking voice. “I was paying so much attention to the goblins in front of me that I didn’t notice the giant come up from behind. She pushed me out of the way and took the hit herself.” He said as he stood up and looked at Harry with a hard look in his eyes.

“But it never should have happened. You should have been there. Why is it that Luna and I were calling out to you the entire time but you didn’t show up until the fight is over? Why weren’t you there?” He nearly yelled as he threw down his sword and advanced on Harry. Both unaware of the two sets of eyes watching them in shock.

“Neville I didn’t find out about the attack until moments before I showed up.” Harry said in an apologetic tone. “But you know damn well that if I had known the small amount of forces sent I would not have come at all. I would not be able to leave Hogwarts unprotected.” This was obviously not the answer Neville was looking for as two strong fists landed across Harry’s face. Harry was rocked backwards by the two powerful blows sending him crashing against the wall. Neville, rushing to press his advantage, rushed forward as Harry climbed back to his feet and leaned against the wall. When a fist came flying towards him Harry quickly ducked under Neville’s arm

before reaching up and clamping his hand around his throat. With a strong push Neville went flying into the wall himself with a strong vise like grip still clamped across his throat.

“If you want a fight you shall have it. We will use Godric Gryffindor’s dueling chamber on the ground floor. I will be there in half an hour, I suggest you get ready.” Harry said with a growl as he released his friend. With a time and place set for their duel Neville had the good manners to leave the hospital wing without incident with a deep scowl on his face.

“What made him so mad?” A soft feminine voice asked. The voice didn’t sound familiar but Harry was thinking too hard at the moment to process that fact.

“He is war monger. As a War Mage he is that perfect weapon of warfare. Whenever a War Mage begins to allow his emotions to take over during battle he will not stop until the fields run red or he is beaten by someone better.” He answered in a deadpan voice.

“Is that why you are going to fight him? To basically, calm him down.”

“Yes, whenever a War Mage is born a Phoenix Lord is born about the same time or shortly before. While many responsibilities come with being a Phoenix Lord, a good deal of our time can be spent calming down overzealous mages. So...” Harry began to speak again when he finally looked up and saw whom he had been speaking to. The sight before him made his mouth drop open in shock. The look on Harry’s face did not seem to be comfortable to the two strangers as they drifted into silence.

“What are you doing out of bed?” Harry asked for lack of anything better. This only served to confuse the two people standing before him.

“Why should we be in...? LESTRANGE!” Frank Longbottom yelled out as the memories of their tortuous night came back.

“Neville, where is he? Where’s my baby?” Alice began asking Harry in a frantic voice as tears began rolling down her cheeks.

“Mrs. Longbottom, calm down. Neville is safe and in perfect health, at the moment.” Harry said soothingly as he patted her on the back.

“What do you mean by that?” She asked with fear evident in her voice. Harry had absolutely no idea how he was going to explain this. To the elder Longbottom’s conscious mind it was as if they had simply gone to sleep fifteen years ago and woke up today. They had no memory of the years spent in the wrap of insanity while locked away at St. Mungos. Needless to say the idea of having a one year old baby the day you are tortured into unconsciousness then wake up to find it’s fifteen years later and your baby is grown will take some getting used to.

“Well you see...” Harry was suddenly cut off when the doors to the hospital wing banged open revealing the last person Harry would want to see.

“Mr. Potter now that I have my memory back I would like to speak with you

about some possible joint publicity appearances that we can use to lift the spirits of the common public..." Gilderoy Lockhart was got no further as Harry spun around grabbing the pompous man by the collar.

"Don't speak to me!" Harry growled before throwing the man back through the door and turning around to the stunned faces of the Longbottoms. After a few minutes of silence it was Frank that spoke.

"Potter? But James and his son Harry were the last of the Potter line." He said in a stutter. Harry simply nodded, confirming that this was true.

"But, but, how did this happen?" Mrs. Longbottom asked while fighting to hold back a panic attack. Harry sighed before sitting down and beginning. For the next ten minutes Harry sat with Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom and explained everything that had happened in the last fifteen years with the exception of the changes that he, Neville, Luna and Ginny had undergone. That could wait for another time. After all he had a fight to attend to.

"But where is Neville now?" Mrs. Longbottom asked pleadingly.

"I suspect he is in the dueling chamber waiting for me." It took a few moments but soon comprehension dawned on the two parents.

"You mean that was Neville? And you have to fight him?" Harry simply nodded before standing up.

"If you will excuse me, I must be going."

"We're coming with you." They both chimed in at the same time as they rushed to catch up with him.

"I don't think that will be a very good idea. There is bound to be a great deal of blood." The two would not take no for an answer but Harry insisted that they be under several invisibility and camouflaging charms so that no one, namely Neville, saw them and became distracted. After picking up Neville's sword where he had dropped it Harry left the hospital wing with two invisible not to mention very curious parents following behind him.

As he descended the three flights of stairs taking him to the ground floor closest to the dueling chamber Harry began feeling a bit uneasy as he looked around to see that very few people were about. This feeling only continued to grow as he continued down a largely unused corridor only to hear a great many overlapping voices echoing towards him. His suspicions were confirmed as he turned the last corner to see Forge and the Marauders waiting outside the hidden doorway leading into the dueling chamber.

"Damn it." He sighed as he approached the four men. "Why are you here?"

"Ah Harry, I'm glad you're here. As to why we are here, that is quite simple. Everyone in this school has been wondering what would happen in a duel between

you and Neville for quite some time now. Including myself considering you forbade me from watching the others. In other words, we're just really excited." Forge said just as Professor McGonagall exited through the doorway causing Harry's jaw to drop.

"And you're encouraging this?" Harry asked scathingly in his shock. The Headmistress however was far from intimidated.

"Of course. Just think how much the younger students, even the old ones, could learn from watching the two best duelers we have ever seen fighting against each other." She responded with a perfectly straight face that caused Harry to tighten his fists and clench his jaw in apparent effort from lashing out verbally at those before him. Instead he quickly entered the chamber and almost gasped at the site. Someone, probably Forge, had expanded the room to its limits and now sat nearly all of the castle's residents with many more standing against the walls around the room. Harry quickly fixed his eyes on the stage that Neville was currently standing on and made his way forward.

"You dropped something." He said as he threw Neville his sword. After a moment where you could hear a pin drop Harry turned to the crowd.

"I am sure that many of you have been looking forward to seeing this duel for some time now. I see that some of you have even brought your young children here to see it as well. That's not going to happen. Those of you with young children will leave. This is no mock duel and as such it will likely get very dirty and will probably involve several serious injuries. So please escort your children outside." Harry stood and watched as many stood put grumbling and led their kids out of the wall. When everyone was settled down he turned back to his opponent and drew his sword after placing a shield around the stage to ensure no curses or weapons could find their way into the crowd. As if on silent agreement the two charged each other and within seconds the sounds of blades ringing together echoed throughout the hall as both combatants seemed to want to sever their opponents head from their shoulders. Everyone watched in awe as the two blades danced through the air sending gleaming streaks of light slicing through the air on their way to their target.

For nearly fifteen minutes neither fighter gave an inch as they met each attack with a perfect response. However that was not to last. After Harry had nearly skewered Neville he found himself over extended and Neville was not one to let an opportunity pass. While Harry's weapon was at an unusable distance and angle Neville brought his knee up and connected it with Harry's abdomen and brought the pommel of his sword down on his upper back just below the neck knocking him to the ground where he received a sharp kick to the ribs. The crowd gasped in shock as Neville raised his sword to shrike but Harry quickly rolled over with a dagger in hand and stabbed it into Neville's thigh causing the younger man to let loose a short cry of pain giving Harry time to regain his footing and ready himself.

With a grunt Neville pulled the dagger out of his thigh before throwing it with a great amount of force towards Harry's heart. Harry easily swung his sword in time to knock the dagger away but he barely had time to bring it back up to block a vicious slash that Neville had started as Harry's concentration had been on the dagger. With their blades lock together Harry slammed his left fist into Neville's face twice before

dropping to the ground and sweeping his feet out from under him. After he fell to the floor Harry continued to spin until his foot shot out catching Neville in the jaw with the heel of his foot sending his former student sprawling across the stage.

Harry approached him quickly with his sword raised ready to strike when Neville threw his hand up, knocking Harry across the stage with a bludgeoning charm. Both men were slow getting up but they used that time to heal any serious injuries they may have had, such as Neville's broken and dislocated jaw and Harry's broken ribs.

In no time at all they seemed ready to go again as they stepped it up a few notches when they turned to some very powerful magic. Everyone watched in rapped and startled attention as Neville crouched down and slammed his fists onto the floor sending a sort of shock wave that raced towards Harry at an incredible speed. Harry had just barely been able to get out of its path to avoid the full force of the spell but he did not get away unscathed. He had just caught the tail end of the wave but it was enough to send him crashing into the wall with the waves force diminishing force slamming into his chest and legs. When the spell had run its course Harry slumped to the ground with two broken legs. Harry cast several curses back to back hoping to delay Neville long enough while he worked to heal his legs.

Despite his effort he was not able to hold Neville off for long and he had only been able to heal one of his legs in time. Using his sword as a crutch, Harry pulled himself up to his feet as Neville began stalking towards him. Lacking any other idea at the moment Harry decided that this would be a good time for some subterfuge. So raising his arms out in front of him, Harry sent a massive wall of fire speeding towards his friend and opponent. Being attacked by elemental magic Neville had no choice but to use an elemental shield which had its drawbacks. Elemental shields only worked against elemental magic.

Because of the wall of fire he was currently trying to hold off, Neville did not see Harry draw a dagger and send it spinning through the air towards the center of the wall. He did however see it come through the wall and his shield. And he most certainly felt it bury itself into his abdomen. He dropped to his knees with a gasp, letting his shield fall as Harry dropped his wall of flames. Looking up Neville could find not sign of Harry. That would be because as soon as he dropped his fire attack Harry had apparated behind his opponent where he called Merlin's staff to him. He quietly placed it behind Neville's head before whispering a soft word that sent Neville collapsing to the floor in an unconscious heap. Harry quickly followed him to the ground where he breathed in deep unsteady breaths as he attempted to heal his other leg while trying to get his head to stop spinning and stomach to stop churning.

After healing all his major injuries Harry looked around to find the dueling chamber in absolute silence with looks of shock, awe and fear on the faces of those present. Harry could understand their feelings though, both him and Neville were still covered in blood from their now healed wounds and the viciousness and power of which they fought was something many of them had never seen before. He saw that even Ginny, Luna and Mrs. Malfoy were present and he began to wonder how long their duel had lasted. Harry lightly chuckled to himself before he turned Neville over onto his back and began to heal his friend's injuries while he remained unconscious. It took sometime but after nearly twenty minutes all injuries were healed and Neville

was simply in a restful sleep. Harry picked him up and threw him over his shoulder before leaving the dueling chamber and making his way towards Neville's quarters with his parents following behind.

After talking for over an hour Harry had convinced Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom to wait in his quarters for Neville to wake up. He thought it would be a good idea to give his friend a little warning before seeing them rather than have them standing over him when he woke up. Harry had been sitting beside his bed since he brought Neville back to his room and Madam Pomfrey had come in a few hours before with Professor McGonagall. She was almost hysterical when she returned from Beauxbatons to find Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom gone. So Harry led them through the tunnels of Marauders Way to his room off of the Slytherin common room. Upon entering Harry let out a groan when he saw the three Marauders sitting before the fire speaking to the Longbottoms who had wide eyed expressions on their faces. Hearing his groan the occupants of the room turned to see Harry, the Headmistress and mediwitch enter.

"Harry! You said that potion of yours would work but I must admit that I had my doubts that they would ever be back to normal." Remus began which caused the Longbottom's eyes to grow even wider. Apparently Harry had neglected to inform them who the brewer of the potion had been.

"Harry brewed the potion?" Frank asked in shock.

"Of course, Harry is probably the best potions master in the world." Sirius answered a bit smugly.

"Really, and what does Snape think about that?" Alice asked with a certain amount of amusement.

"He loves it. He's learned more about potions in the last few months than he has in the last several years. He's not complaining."

"A Potter teaching both a Snape AND a Malfoy, it's a cruel and ironic world we live in." Peter commented drawing attention, unwanted attention, towards him.

"Pettigrew, what do you think you are doing out of the hospital wing? You still have two days left in observation." Madam Pomfrey yelled. After giving Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom a thorough examination 'Mommy' Pomfrey insisted in her demands of giving Harry and Neville a quick examination. Harry decided to humor her, after all it had to take some getting used to that the two students she treated the most during their time at Hogwarts no longer needed her care.

When Neville woke all he could feel was the pounding in his head and his sore muscles. Opening his eyes didn't help much as the blinding white light seemed to burn said eyes into non existence until the lights in the room suddenly dimmed. For several moments he was unsure of what had caused it until he recognized Harry's magical signature beside him.

"Thank you Harry."

"Your welcome." The two sat in silence for a few moments as Harry waited for

the memories of early that day returned to his former apprentice and when they did Neville let out a loud groan and slumped back against his pillows.

“I’m sorry Harry, I never should have lost control like that.” He apologized in a soft voice. He seemed about to continue but Harry cut him off, as he always does in this situation.

“Neville stop, there is no need to apologize. This is part of who we are. No one can control their emotions every time they go into a fight. On the rare occasion you lose control it is my job to help you regain that control. It has been a long time since it happened last time, that has to count for something don’t you think.”

“I guess your right.”

“Of course I am. Now why don’t you get up, you have a few visitors.”

“Who?” Neville asked in confusion.

“Well for one, Gwen is here. She felt the conflict in your mind and got worried so she came as fast as she could. Seeing a massive dragon landing on the school grounds scared the hell out of a lot of people, especially the muggles but we managed to calm everyone down. She’s down on the grounds now playing with some of the children, rather amusing to watch actually.”

“Who else?”

“Pardon?” Harry asked in confusion. Neville rolled his eyes before clarifying.

“You said visitors, as in plural, more than one. So who else is here?”

“Oh, yes I was getting to that. Your parents are waiting for you in my quarters.” Harry watched in amusement as Neville fell out of bed, tangled up in his sheets. It took him a few moments before he was free from his bedding and able to stand once again.

“What, you mean they are healed already, they have their memories back and everything?” He asked nervously.

“When they woke they had no memory of their time in St. Mungos or anything that happened since being moved here. It’s as if they went to sleep fifteen years ago and woke up today. But I was able to fill them in on most of what has happened since their attack and I’m pretty sure the Marauders have given them more details over the last couple of hours. They are currently entertaining your parents in my room.” Harry finished with a small smile. Neville paced back and forth across the room several times before heading to the door.

“I’ll see you later Harry.”

“You want to put on some pants chief? First impressions and all.” Harry said with a chuckle as Neville noticed he wasn’t wearing any pants. Nodding a quick thanks Neville dressed himself with a quick wave of the hand before walking out of the door leaving a very amused Harry behind.

Chapter Twenty Nine: Twelve Hour Window

Neville stood inside the tunnels of Marauders Way, just outside of Harry's quarters for quite some time. When he first got there he was simply going to rush inside in his excitement before a thought occurred to him. 'When had his parents awoken?' It's such a simple question but it was one that filled him with anxiety and even a little fear. Had they seen his confrontation with Harry in the hospital or his all out fight with him just hours before? What would they think of him? He did not know how long he stood there but was pulled out of his thoughts when sounds of a commotion from inside reached him. Placing his hand on the wall engraved with a serpent Neville rushed into the room to find a rather amusing, if not confusing sight.

His father was standing in front of the fireplace with someone's wand in his hand, pointing at both Sirius and Peter as if deciding which one he should curse. The two afore mentioned pranksters were both cowering behind the couch, only occasionally poking their heads out to try and protest their innocence. Remus had his mother over towards the door into the Slytherin common room and Neville distinctly heard him say that she should not interfere, although he saw the distinct look of enjoyment in Remus' eyes.

"I swear Frank, Peter was their secret keeper not me." Sirius said in a pleading tone. Mr. Longbottom was quick to answer.

"Yeah, and Peter's dead, you killed him." He yelled scathingly as he fired off a cutting curse that barely missed Sirius as he ducked back down.

"Thanks a lot Padfoot. What the hell am I supposed to say to that? It's not like I can say I was framed, you already used that one." Peter bit out. "Oh, I know, how about, I'm not dead I was kidnapped and kept prisoner at the Malfoy's for fifteen years while someone else pretended to be me." He snapped out sarcastically before turning his attention back to his former colleague. Of course Remus could confirm or deny anything that was being said, but he was being closed lipped on the subject. Whenever his fellow Marauders would direct a question or comment to their friend he would simply look between the three men in confusion which did not help one bit when it came to Frank Longbottom, a legend among Aurors.

Neville found the situation very humorous and also very confusing. Why would his father believe Sirius to be guilty and Peter dead. Unless Harry didn't tell them everything but why leave out such a big piece such as that. Even so why would they just now get into a conflict about this. According to Harry his parents were left with the Marauders sometime ago but there was no trouble until now. This made no sense.

'Harry what's going on?' Neville mentally pushed the question out towards his friend, whom he believed to have the answer. He was greeted with a laugh.

'I was wondering how long it would take you to ask. The answer is simple. When your parents woke up most of their memories came back within a relatively short period of time, others took longer and still some have yet to be recovered. They will probably never remember everything but seeing, hearing and experiencing things can help that process. That's why I left them with the Marauders.'

‘And you didn’t see fit to tell them of Sirius’ innocence when you told them everything else?’ Neville asked with a smirk.

‘I didn’t tell them everything. I gave them a quick rundown of the last fifteen years; it’s your job to tell them everything else.’

‘But why not tell them something as simple as a man’s innocence; it could have saved a lot of trouble?’

‘Innocence is hardly simple. Besides if I had we would not be watching this lovely show now would we?’ Harry laughed as he imagined Neville’s reaction.

‘You’re watching? How?’

‘See that pin on Remus’ robes? That’s how. That’s enough talk for now, let’s watch.’ Neville turned his attention back to the current situation in time to see his father cast a spell that was slowly burning away the couch that his prey was hiding behind. At the same moment Remus drew his wand in case he had to intervene.

“Come on Frank, we don’t want to have to hurt you.” Peter said, drawing looks from everyone present.

“Us, Hurt him?” Sirius asked incredulously, just as an incineration charm hit the couch. Seeing as their hiding place was vanishing before their eyes and Sirius’ wand was now in Frank’s possession, Peter did the only thing he could think of. With a swift kick he knocked Sirius to the floor where Mr. Longbottom easily stunned the unarmed and shocked man. Shifting his vision to his other target he cast another stunning spell which caught Peter dead on. But Wormtail had launched his own curse before going down.

“Oh. My. GOD.” Remus exclaimed as he looked at the three unconscious forms on the ground. “Peter, Peter of all people took down Frank Longbottom.”

“WHAT? So that really is Peter?” Alice screamed. Remus could only nod dumbly until Alice slapped him to get his attention. “Then why didn’t you say something?”

“I thought it was funny.” He shrugged. “I never expected they could get the jump on Frank. Besides, Harry thought it to be a fitting punishment.”

“Punishment for what? And why does everyone act like Harry is in charge? Where is Professor Dumbledore?” She asked in confusion. Remus looked at her first in shock, and then anguish.

“You weren’t told? Well first the punishment was for our sarcastic and witty banter with him about certain ‘details’ of his life. Harry decided that I was punished enough when I discovered his library and endured the traps and security charms placed on it. I’m assuming you will be given all the details as soon as you settle in. As for your second question, it is because he is in charge. He took complete control of Hogwarts and protecting those here along with Professor McGonagall after Albus was

killed in battle on Halloween.” Mrs. Longbottom gasped and covered her mouth as silent tears trickled down her cheeks.

“How did this happen?”

“I will answer that Remus.” Neville spoke up quietly from the doorway, startling those present. “Would you mind giving us a few minutes?” Remus nodded before levitating Peter and Sirius out of the room as Neville revived his father. With a few words he was able to prevent his father from seeking the ‘Death Eater scum’ as he put it and listen to reason. After calming his father down and consoling his mother who began crying the moment she saw him. He was both surprised and greatly relieved when neither showed fear or even nervousness around him due to some of the more volatile aspects of his heritage. So he quickly launched into his tale concerning the past few years, leaving none of the details out.

Both were shocked to learn how easily they were able to defeat Voldemort but even more so when they learned of the power Lord Maul commanded and the ease and swiftness in which he had seemingly taken over the world. He also told his parents who and what he and his friends really were and the powers and abilities they possessed. The pride shining in their eyes could leave no room for doubt that though they were robbed of the last fifteen years, their love for their son was just as strong as it had been the last time they ‘saw’ him.

While Neville was speaking with his parents Harry was having a little impromptu meeting with Luna, Ginny and Mrs. Malfoy.

“So what are the damages to Beauxbatons?” Harry asked pointedly. Ginny wasted no time in answering.

“Well there were four fatalities among the students, one teacher, two parents and the Minister of Magic himself. There were no serious injuries with the exception of Fleur, everyone else just has an assortment of bumps and bruises.”

“What about the school its self?”

“The school is a different problem all together.” Luna began. “Its structure just wasn’t made to take a beating, if it weren’t for the protective wards a hand full of fourth years could breach their security. And with the present condition of the walls it probably wouldn’t even take that.”

“Even with their rather mediocre defenses, why send such a small and ill-equipped force. He has the man power so why not overrun the school entirely?” Harry asked more to himself than anyone else. It was at this point that Luna remembered her encounter with the five Beauxbatons students and three Death Eaters.

“He wasn’t trying to take the school outright. He was trying to retrieve something. He didn’t want to risk a full scale attack because he didn’t want to risk damaging or destroying whatever it was that he after.” Upon seeing the confused looks directed at her she elaborated. “Just after the attack started I saw five students leave the school and run into the trees. They were there meeting a few Death Eaters.

Apparently these children were blackmailed with the deaths of their families if they did not bring them what they asked for.”

“And?” Harry prompted after waiting a few moments for her to continue as she drifted off into space. “What was he after?”

“Hmm, oh, it was a golden spear. I asked Madam Maxime about it but all she knew was that it was carried by King Richard during the crusades and when he was captured by the French on his way back to England it was kept as a trophy. It was brought to Beauxbatons several centuries ago by its current headmaster. It’s said to have strong magical qualities but no one is sure what or even who made it or where it came from.” Harry was not sure what it was but he was positive he knew something about this spear. It was just one of those things that nags at you from the back of your mind, taunting you with the information you need. After a few thoughtful minutes he brushed it off for the time being in favor of something of which he was well informed.

Mrs. Malfoy had risked a lot when she had begun feeding information to Professor Dumbledore during both wars with Voldemort but things had turned out alright. But spying on Jericho was an entirely different scenario and as a Slytherin she should know better. After nearly an hour of arguments Harry realized that he had lost this round but was able to convince her to make contact with the Weasley twins and pass information on through them instead of sending information directly to Hogwarts where it could easily be intercepted during delivery. Luna apparated Mrs. Malfoy back to her home after she agreed to inform Fred and George about the attack on Beauxbatons, before heading back to Beauxbatons where Ginny would meet her later to help repair damages.

“I’ll be along this evening to help with the wards, the three of us together should have little problem raising those necessary in a short amount of time.” Harry told Ginny as they sat on the couch in front of the fire, wrapped in each others arms. “Normally I would just send Neville back but with him basically just meeting his parents I don’t think I would feel right about that. Besides with his loss of control this morning I don’t want him in a possible hostile situation just yet.”

“That’s probably wise. Have you been able to tell if there was any complications with the Longbottom’s potion?”

“Of course not! When was the last time I brewed an unsuccessful potion?” Harry asked with a hint of insult which only served to make Ginny giggle like a little girl.

“Sorry Harry but even after so many years I can’t think of you as a master at potions. I just think back to your marks in Snape’s classes.”

“Yeah, and now look at who’s teaching who.” She giggled at the thought of Snape listening in rapt attention to anything and everything that Harry had to say. “Speaking of which, you better get to the dungeons before the ‘children’ kill each other.” Harry sighed in resignation before admitting she was right and pulling himself to his feet.

“I’ll see you this evening.” He informed her before planting a chaste kiss on her

lips and ducking through the door that led out into the Gryffindor common room and made his way down to the armory where he was to meet his two apprentices. He chuckled lightly to himself as he thought of the emotions that would be flaring if he left them alone for too long.

True to his thoughts, as he made his way through the dungeons raised voices were getting louder as each moment passed. He allowed himself one final laugh before composing himself and his features became sharp and his eyes became cold and he moved into the armory.

"I truly hope you are simply trying to motivate each other with those threats because if not, then the consequences will be most severe." He said coolly which brought the too bickering old enemies to a stand still as the pair gulped visibly. "The two of you will be training together for sometime so you might as well get used to each other. But since Ron here has been training for a few months longer than you Draco he will also help to get you up to speed."

"Why is it that I wasn't told you had another apprentice?" Malfoy bite out but quickly quieted himself under Harry's glare.

"For one, I am the teacher here and I do not have to explain my actions to you. And secondly, traditionally when someone is taken on as an apprentice it is kept a secret until such a time when the master feels the student is ready for others to know. I could have several others and you would not know. But, I no longer have the time to train you both individually so you will train together."

"Then why did you let everyone else know that I was your student?" Malfoy asked smugly thinking that he had found a flaw in Harry's reasoning.

"Because Draco, like I told you during your first lesson, you being my apprentice is possibly the only thing keeping you alive. As your 'master', anyone seeking to harm you has to deal with me." A strange look came across Draco's face for a moment, so briefly that Harry was unable to recognize it but decided not to dwell on it. "Since the two of you have taken a great deal of beatings lately, and improved greatly I might add, we are going to do something different today." Harry said and was pleasantly surprised when both boys eyed the practice weapons in their hands with a small amount of disappointment. 'Well at least I know they still want to learn.'

"What are we going to do?" Ron asked curiously. Before beginning Harry ran everything over in his head once more. The real reason he decided to train Ron and Draco together was because they both had one similarity that disturbed him greatly, especially when thinking about his best friend.

"We are going to have a lesson in the real world." Harry answered to their confusion. "We are going to take a bit of a field trip." He said as he reached out to rest a hand on each of their shoulders. And in the blink of an eye, they were gone.

"Are you sure this is wise Harry? This could have an entirely different effect than you intend. You've never gone this close before." A voice Ron recognized as belonging to Forge said with a hint of hesitation and unease.

“I don’t think I really have a choice in the matter. I’ve been racking my brain for weeks trying to figure out a way to do this in an easy manner but I can’t and I won’t be there for long so I think my shields will hold. And since they are already awake we might as well get started.” In confusion and worry Ron lay as still as he could wondering what was going on and where he was. “Stop pretending to be asleep and get up, we have much to do.” Harry snapped. Upon opening his eyes Ron noticed he was lying on a bed in the middle of a bare white room. The only other furniture in the room was the two arm chairs that were occupied by Harry and Forge. Feeling the bed shift a bit he looked sharply to his left only to lock eyes with Draco Malfoy. ‘I’m in bed with Malfoy?’ He asked himself with disgust as he scrambled to stand up and Draco did the same, both looking around at their surroundings in confusion and a little panic.

“Now that you are both up we can begin. Follow me!” Harry ordered as he left the room with Forge at his side. Casting a quickly confused glance at one another Ron and Draco quickly followed.

“Harry where are we and what are we doing here?” Ron asked in confusion and worry considering he could not remember how he had gotten there. Malfoy was obviously feeling the same as his eyes darted about at a frantic pace.

“We are in Forge’s home so calm down. The first time someone travels here they pass out and lose a few minutes of their memory since the journey is such a strain on the mind. But as I have already said, we are going to take a field trip.” Harry said as Ron and Draco looked at each other in confusion, neither remembering hearing that. The last thing they remembered was arguing in the armory.

“Where are we going and why?” Draco asked carefully.

“You see it will do me no good what so ever to train up apprentices only to have to kill them later on because of the path they chose. When I first took Draco on Ron you protested a bit believing that he was a lost cause and would simply use the knowledge and abilities I help him achieve for his own ends. What you don’t seem to understand is that you, above most others in this school, are at risk from this same fate.” Harry said sadly.

“WHAT!” Ron and surprisingly Draco screamed out in unison in disbelief. “I would never turn dark.” Ron said defensively, but Harry had no intention of getting into a debate right now, first he wanted to show BOTH young men the price of abandoning the light. Turning to both young men Harry gave a casual wave of his hand and their world was lost to them in a swirl of color.

“So you’re ‘bonded’ to a dragon?” Frank Longbottom asked for about the twentieth time since their conversation had begun. No matter what they were currently speaking about, that question kept coming back to him.

“Yes Frank now shut up.” Alice snapped in exasperation before turning her attention back to her son. “So how old are you?” She asked in curiosity and sadness, wondering how long her son had lived without her.

“Um, well,” He began with an embarrassed expression on his face. “About eight hundred years or somewhere around that.” He said quietly as his parents jaws seemed to hit the floor and his mother’s eyes filled with tears, which only served to make his face turn red, wishing he had said nothing.

“How were you, um, are the others just as old?” His mother asked with a sob after composing herself. This line of questioning was very uncomfortable for Neville but he felt that his parents deserved to know certain details that he would rather others didn’t.

“No, our ages very really. Harry for example is much older than any of the rest.”

“How old is he?” Frank asked, his attention finally pulled away from the dragon.

“Damned if I know. I don’t really remember how it started but we all became very secretive about that detail. No one knows any of our ages, except you now know mine. Due to several comments he has made over the years and many knowing looks, we believe that Harry really knows all of our ages. Really the only thing we know for sure is that over all Albus was the youngest of us, which is kind of weird, and Harry is by far the oldest.”

“Well what was ancient Egypt really like, I have heard they had some truly fascinating libraries?” His mother asked eagerly much to Frank’s annoyance and Neville’s horror.

“My god, another one.” He said with sadness while his father looked on in confusion and his mother with confusion and a hint of sadness that her son disliked her in anyway. After giving a dramatic sigh he looked back up and continued. “Oh well, I’ve spent centuries around bookworms so I guess I’m used to it.” Frank roared with laughter at this comment while his wife tried to look stern but blushed and only succeeded in looking somewhat curious.

“I sound like one of your friends?” He nodded with a smile while he conjured three butter beers.

“Well three actually. Albus of course. Hermione Granger who is a sixth year Gryffindor. Without her Harry and Ron Weasley would probably still be first years. Then you’ve got Harry himself. He’s got more books and manuscripts locked away in his own library then the Ministry and Hogwarts combined. Many of them are of ancient magic and potions that have simply been forgotten by mankind. He’s got several on muggle scientific theory that leaves me scratching my head in confusion. I don’t understand half the stuff he reads.” He finished before taking a swig of his butter beer.

“Well enough of that, lets find something to do.” Hearing his father’s suggestion, Neville quickly jumped to his feet.

“What’s wrong?” His mother asked in concern.

“Gwen has been down on the grounds waiting for me for several hours now.

Harry told me she was playing with some of the children but when she is kept waiting she becomes irritated and short tempered with those around her. She could easily hurt someone unintentionally.” He explain before rushing out the door with his parents right behind him, running full speed through the tunnels towards the entrance hall, completely forgetting that he could apparate on Hogwarts grounds.

“Where the hell are we?” Draco nearly screamed as he looked around in the darkness that surrounded them. Luckily Harry had the presence of mind to place silencing and invisibility charms on the three of them as soon as they materialized.

“I’m sure you will figure it out soon enough.” Harry said just as two figures arrived with a blinding flash of light causing both Draco and Ron to raise their wands. “Do nothing.” He said waspishly to his two apprentices. “They can neither see you nor hear you so put those away, you will not be needing them.”

“Kill the spare!” They heard a rasping voice command before a bright green light flared and impacted with one of the new arrivals as the second collapsed to the ground in what appeared to be unbearable pain. After a quick look around Ron realized where they must be and who those figures were.

“Harry is this really, well, you know?” He asked with a pale white face. Malfoy looked on in confusion as Harry simply nodded as he watched Robert Longstreet, the fake Peter Pettigrew, tie his younger self to the headstone of Tom Marvolo Riddle.

“What is this supposed to be?” Draco asked with curiosity

“The resurrection of Voldemort.” Harry answered simply. Malfoy quickly turned back to the scene with interest just in time to see Longstreet sever his right hand and throw it into the bubbling cauldron. At which time he quickly turned away again. They all stood and watched in morbid fascination at the scene playing out in front of them. Ron, for a brief moment glanced at his friend in time to see a pained expression quickly cross his face and he realized that no matter how old he was and how long he will continue to live, he will always be haunted by that night.

Draco looked on in both horror and disgust as he saw his father cowering at Voldemort’s feet while kissing the hem of his robes. He was aware that the lesser Death Eaters were required to do this but it was supposed to be unthinkable for a Malfoy to grovel in such a manner to anyone. They further watched as Voldemort taunted Harry while placing the cruciatus and imperious curses on him. And finally their duel.

“Ah, this is what I wanted you to see.” Harry said, breaking the silence between them, as they watched his younger self make a run for the portkey and Cedric’s body as curses flew all around him. Voldemort watched with a scream of fury as Harry disappeared in a flash with the tri-wizard cup and the body of Cedric Diggory.

“Malfoy!” He shrieked. The referred Death Eater rushed over to his master and immediately fell to his knees. “Crucio!” He yelled out causing Lucius to fall to the ground immediately, screaming and convulsing in pain. For nearly an hour Voldemort tortured all of his followers mercilessly, his high pitched laugh echoing loudly all

around them.

Before the two boys knew it they were once again standing in the empty corridor they had left behind, both pale and feeling a little ill.

“Why would he do that?” Ron asked after taking in a shaky breath.

“It was his own fault that he was unable to beat me during our duel and I escaped. But he pinned the blame on his Death Eaters because most dark wizards have an over inflated sense of ego. In their minds their infallible, they can do no wrong. They will torture their followers for any number of reasons such as failure, betrayal or even because their in a good mood and want to hear you scream.”

“But why did you show us that?” Malfoy questioned quietly.

“Like I said earlier, you are both in danger in of falling into this life. I simply wanted to show you what it was actually like, not the bullshit pureblood rhetoric you would hear from Death Eaters or Death Eater sympathizers.”

“Why would you believe me capable of choosing such a life Harry? You’ve been my best friend for six years. How could you think that?” Ron asked with a deep hurt in his voice. Draco also seemed to be deeply interested as to why Harry would think such a thing.

“Because Ron with the amount of jealousy you feel towards others, especially your family and friends, you could easily be tempted with the promise of power and importance. You remember what you saw in the Mirror of Erised during our first year.” When Ron nodded Harry continued. “You saw yourself as very popular, head boy, quiddich captain. Basically it was all of your brothers best traits rolled up in one. All of your life you have felt like you were living in the shadow of your brothers, and now your sister as well, and there was no way out. These feelings could easily be turned to lure you away. What you have never realized is that through your actions over the last six years you have by far surpassed the accomplishments your brothers ever achieved at school. You are too quick to believe the worst about yourself rather than the good.” Ron stood stock still for several moments as a whole range of emotions played through him, from anger at Harry’s distrust too shame for feeling angry. Relief that someone actually knew and understood how he had felt for so long, too a great sense of pride as he thought back to all he and his friends had done over the years.

“Thank you Harry.” He said after several minutes of silence to which Harry nodded in return.

“Now, Draco, the reason I wanted you to see that is because...”

“We have to find away to get rid of all that C4 without loosing anyone in the process. Or even steal some for our self.” George said as he paced along the chamber that they customarily used for meetings.

“Well it’s not like we can simply walk in, grab some and leave, our invisibility

boosters will hide us but they won't mask anything we try to take. A crate floating around by it's self would be a little conspicuous don't you think." Angelina commented quietly, still feeling a bit weak from her wounds received two days before.

"We also won't be able to simply destroy it." Major Tutsbury interjected. "A simple flame will set it off but due to the magical wards surrounding the place no curse or military weapon would penetrate. It would simply alert them to our position. We need someone within the wards for this to work but they would have no where near enough time to get out."

The entire group of several dozen sat in companionable silence for some time, each racking their brains for some inkling of an idea to form some kind a plan around.

"Portals!" Bill suddenly burst out after nearly an hour, drawing the attention of all in the room.

"What?" Katie asked in confusion. Clearly some of those present had forgotten what they had originally been pondering.

"We use portals, like the ones Neferatu is able to make, to get rid of this C4 stuff and get away safely. You said his portals can't be traced so we should be able to get and get out before the stuff blows with no one knowing we were there." Bill explained in excitement.

"Bill they may be unable to trace an elfe's portals but elven magic or not Commander Kull will know that a portal from somewhere has been opened nearby. We could very easily come through with a hundred wands launching curses at us." Fred explained but Bill had a thoughtful look on his face.

"Ok, but a portal could still be used to escape, couldn't it? What I mean is we enter the place with these invisibility boosters of yours, rig the stuff to blow up and then haul ass through a portal. From what I have read on the subject it seems that something insubstantial, like the energy from an explosion, would be unable to enter. So the instant we pass through we should be safe." Everyone just stared at each other for several moments before wicked grins spread across the faces of the Weasley twins who immediately got everyone to work out the details of their next little adventure while they went to send off a message to their favorite vampire.

"Now Draco, the reason I wanted you to see that is for reasons I'm sure you are already aware of so I won't go into it instead I am going to give you a bit of a history lesson to show you where your family came from and how far they've slipped in the last few centuries." Harry started out in a lecturing tone that piqued both boys' interest.

"As you know taking on an apprentice dates back thousands of years and quickly seemed to die out as it was no longer really necessary when more and more schools were founded. However the first of your ancestors with magical blood was entrusted to a powerful mage for his schooling because his family could not afford to send him away to school and as they were muggles and had no real knowledge of the magical world or its customs and political structure. That was about eight hundred years ago."

“Wait a moment, did you say muggles?” Malfoy screamed with shock. “There is no possible way this is true. My family line can be traced back to long before the time of Salazar Slytherin himself.” He said with a huff that Harry and Ron both found amusing.

“I hate to be the one to tell you this Draco,” However his tone said otherwise. “But all that information you’ve been told and all those documents you’ve seen are total fabrications. There are but six family lines still in existence in England that’s magical ties can be traced that far back and the Malfoys aren’t one of them. Giving what has happened over the last few months I’m sure you know what families I’m talking about. Just about every family you find that is proud of their ‘pure blood’ makes the same claims of their families. But we’re getting off track here.”

“Where was I, oh yes, any so the mage trained your ancestor, his name was Tiberius and believe it or not, he was a light wizard though and though. The mage became close with the family and every one of the male heirs was an apprentice of his for nearly four hundred years until he got a bad egg. His student at the time was a lazy, whining little bastard and he eventually turned his father over to a rising dark lord and joined him. To say the mage was furious would be an understatement. He knew the family would turn eventually but it still caught him off guard and really pissed him off.

Well he made short work of this dark lord wannabe and then bound the betraying son’s magic and left him to live life as a squib but he still went on to teach his children the importance of purity of blood. That is kind of ironic since his son later killed him for being a squib. Funny how things turn out isn’t it.”

“And what does this ridiculous story have to do with me?” Malfoy asked scathingly. Harry flashed him a really nasty smirk before he answered.

“Because, even though the Malfoys turned their back on the light the mage did not turn his back on them. He watched from afar to make sure that the family line would continue. Not out of any love for what your family had become but out of respect for his past students. And it is by his grace that you are still alive, not mine. If I had my way you would be dead by now.” Malfoy quickly started to back away. He could tell that Harry didn’t really want to kill him but he was very intimidating nonetheless.

“Who, who was the mage?” Ron asked out of curiosity. Harry looked to his friend and then back to Malfoy with an amused look spreading across his face.

“It’s really quite funny really, that Draco here actually owes his whole existence to Neville.” Draco looked up in shock and looked ready to pass out at any minute. “Where do you think the Malfoy family crest came from? It’s a slight variation of Neville’s tattoo. They designed it in honor of him.” Harry finished and howled with laughter as Draco slid down the wall in an unconscious heap.

Neville burst through the massive doors and rushed out on to the school grounds only to come to a sharp halt with his mouth dropping open in shock. His sudden stop caused his parents to crash into his back which seemed to have no affect what so ever on his balance.

After composing themselves, Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom followed Neville's stare and froze at the sight before them.

"That is one big dragon." His father choked out after composing himself enough to speak. However what shocked both parents and son was the fact that several children seemed to be climbing on said dragon and going on short flights around the castle grounds while Charlie Weasley hopped around in joy. "I thought you said she was short tempered?" He asked while watching Gwen seemed to role around much like a playful cat.

"She is. Of course you don't exactly see many children eager to approach a dragon so I guess it's just adults. Then again those adults are usually trying to harm her or confine her so I guess that short temper is justified." Neville said before approaching Gwen as she landed and several small children slid off her back to run with excitement to their worried and nervous parents. Many of whom were grateful and relieved to see Neville arrive. When she saw Neville approaching Gwen let of a quiet growl which almost sounded as if it were meant to convey embarrassment when suddenly, with a pop, she was no longer the towering figure that had stood there previously but was actually quite a bit smaller. Everyone looked on in shock as the dragon, that now stood only slightly taller than Neville himself, rushed to him and bowled him over like an over excited old friend.

Of all the spectators none was more stunned than Charlie Weasley who looked about ready to pass out with sheer bliss. Never in his life did he believe that he would be fortunate enough to see a dragon old and powerful enough to change its own appearance. Legends and stories passed on by dragon handlers spoke of several throughout history that could accomplish such a feat but never had he believed that he would, oh, never mind there he goes. He's out and with a stupid smile on his face. Some of those nearest him were able to pull themselves out of their shock momentarily to look down on Charlie's unconscious form in amusement.

'Were you hurt terribly this time?' Gwen asked Neville after he picked himself up off the ground.

'Why is that always your first question?' he asked in mock annoyance. 'Has the possibility ever occurred to you that I may have beaten him?' He was quickly met with a hard look from his friend.

'If you could control your temper you may have had a chance.'

'If I could control my temper and thought more clearly Harry wouldn't have held back like he does. But anyway, what were you doing out here?' He asked with a grin as he eyed the children that were running around the grounds. Gwen for her part seemed to put on an embarrassed look when asked. Nearly everyone within hearing range stood in absolute shock as the watched and heard Neville converse with a dragon in roars and growls.

'Well I got bored after I got here and some of the smaller children from muggle families came up to me not realizing that it could be dangerous. Next thing I know there's one giving me a good scratch behind my left ear and a couple are using my tail

for a slide. That feels really good by the way. The way they slide down and it puts pressure on my scales in just the right places.’ At this point Neville had lost all chance of holding his laughter in and it exploded out of him gaining him curious looks from the onlookers and an annoyed look from Gwen.

“Hey Bill, you up for a little fun?” George asked his older brother as he found him pouring over several maps they had made of the underground tunnels. Bill was one that definitely liked to know where he was at all times, so the time he had free since he joined his brothers there after the attack by the acromantula was spent pouring over maps and exploring the tunnels.

“Sure, what did you have in mind?”

“Neferatu won’t be able to get here until tomorrow morning at the earliest so Fred and I thought it would be a good idea to keep an eye on the docks until we can get in there to blow that C-4. I was just heading out and thought I would ask if you wanted to come along.”

“Yeah that’s probably a really good idea. You want to leave now?”

“Yes, just grab an invisibility booster and your wand. I’ve got enough food for the two of us for the night and a radio so we’re all set.” George said as he held up the bag he was carrying over his shoulder.

Back in the dungeons of Hogwarts, Harry and Ron reappeared mere moments after they had originally left with an unconscious Draco floating behind them. Ron still looked highly amused about the events of the day and the words that were said, but also confused.

“Harry I thought you said that when you went back in time that way that you couldn’t go back to where you already were?”

“Oh, that. Well I found a way around that.”

“How?” Ron asked curiously but then almost slapped himself and groaned as a look passed before Harry’s eyes that he routinely saw in Hermione’s. That look always meant two things, he wasn’t going to understand a word and he would likely end up with a headache. Harry thought for a moment before he began to explain.

“Ok, when you use a time turner, or any type of time spell, it takes you outside of the normal flow of time. They were designed this way because they can only take you so far back and you are likely to encounter your ‘past self’ or at least be in close proximity. This in its self is a problem. If you were inside the normal flow of time and being so close to your past self could cause Entropic Cascade Failure on the cellular level. Two or more of you in a single reality can cause a temporal distortion that WOULD tear your body’s cells apart. That is why time turners take you outside of normal time. Now going back as we just did does not, that is why we couldn’t go back to a time where we were already in, at first.

You see when we were in the grave yard just now I had to shield myself against

this type of distortion or I would have been torn apart. You and Draco were safe for at least a few hours because your past selves were far enough away so you didn't require a shield. The farther you are from each other the longer you can last in the same time. It took me a long time to figure out how to shield from that but I must say that the physics behind the whole concept is intriguing." He finished as he looked over to Ron who was just staring at him with his mouth open wide.

"I have no idea what you just said!" Ron responded.

"Ok, simply put, I found away to shield ourselves so we could go back."

"Alright now that I understand." Ron said as they made their way out of the armory with Draco floating along with them. As they walked through the dungeons Harry began to feel decidedly nervous about something but could not figure out why.

"Ron can you do me a favor?"

"What do you need?" Ron asked, slightly confused.

"I want you to go check on Fred and George for me. For some reason I've got a really bad feeling about something and I want to know if they've heard anything." Harry replied in a distracted tone.

"Ok," he answered slowly. "How am I going to get there?"

"I'll send you with a portkey and Fawks; he'll meet you in your dorm room. When they were here your brothers gave me their exact location in London so I could make a portkey to send someone directly to them if need be. If there is something serious going on, come back immediately and inform me. If not, send a message back with Fawks and stay and visit with your brothers for a few hours before coming back."

"Alright I'll go get my stuff together and hurry off. Oh by the way, you get to tell mum. I'm not about to go tell her I'm going off into a war zone so I guess you'll just have to do it." Ron laughed as he made his way back to the Gryffindor common room as Harry headed to the hospital wing with Draco in tow.

After leaving the still unconscious Malfoy in Madam Pomfrey's capable hands Harry walked slowly towards the rooms the rest of the Weasley family were staying in. 'This is bound to get loud.' He thought to himself as he raised his fist to knock on the heavy oak door.

When Draco awoke he had a massive headache and couldn't seem to keep it from spinning. He was a little startled to feel the clean crisp sheets beneath him that clearly indicated that he was in the hospital wing. Slowly he opened his eyes to look around the room. With the darkness it was clear that it was sometime during the night and there was no sign of Madam Pomfrey. A detail he was immensely grateful for. There was however someone else there. With a groan he threw his arm across his eyes in annoyance.

“Why are you doing this?” He almost seemed to whine.

“I’ve already told you.”

“Bullshit!” Draco nearly shouted as he quickly sat up in bed. “Everything you have done since you came back to this school you have done for specific reasons. I refuse to believe that you have done all this simply to keep others from killing me. So tell me why!” He demanded. Harry regarded the younger man in front of him for several moments before answering.

“I’m trying to keep someone from having to hold good on her promise.” He responded, thinking back to his first conversation with Mrs. Malfoy when she said she would kill Draco herself if he followed in his fathers footsteps. “You see Draco, for nearly nine hundred years the students that have been in Slytherin have always been regarded with a certain amount of suspicion from the other students and even some of the professors. Everyone believes them to be evil little Death Eater wannabes. For some, this assessment is true, but for the vast majority it is not. Most Slytherins have brains enough to think for themselves instead of being lead around by their balls.” Draco was about to interrupt angrily but Harry cut him off.

“Your family was once one of the most powerful and influential families in the magical world. Not because they followed the orders of someone powerful like Voldemort or Lord Maul but because they were respected and did not fear to let everyone know where they stood. Most would have sided with them without even having to be asked much like they would have with Dumbledore or myself. But later they chose to follow with fear as a tool instead of lead with respect. Since that happened there hasn’t been a member of your family that had the balls or intellect to make decisions for themselves. Neville thinks that perhaps you do.” He said as he stood up and made his way to the door before turning around for one last brief question.

“So the only thing that remains to be seen is do you or do you not want to start your families’ history over, and begin thinking for yourself as only a TRUE Slytherin can?” With that Harry turned and left the hospital wing leaving a very confused Malfoy in his wake. Fawks had come back not long after Harry returned to the Hospital wing with word from Ron that everything seemed ok so Harry apparated directly to Beauxbatons to help Ginny and Luna reestablish the schools wards.

<I don’t remember where I read it but that last line ‘as only a true Slytherin can’ is not mine. I just thought it fit really good right here.>

“Halt! Stay right where you are!” Were the first words Ron heard when he appeared in the cold, damp tunnels beneath London. He was quick to do just that since the person was behind him. He figured he would let them come in closer before he tried anything. “Who are you and what are you doing here?” Ron nearly cursed to himself, it was clear this man was going to come no closer until he determined that Ron was or was not a threat.

“Ron Weasley, I’m here looking for Fred and George Weasley.” He decided to be truthful guessing he had a fifty/fifty chance of these people working with his

brothers. Besides, Death Eaters would have probably cursed him on the spot. For a brief moment he heard the man murmuring in a really low voice before he spoke again. "Someone is coming to see if you are who you say you are, until then drop all your weapons and sit with your back against the wall."

"Fuck." He whispered to himself before doing as he was told. Simply disarming himself took awhile and he was quite pleased to hear a few sharp intakes of breath at the sheer number of weapons he carried. Then again it could also be because they had noticed Fawks. After placing all his weapons on the ground on one side of the tunnel he leaned up against the opposite wall where he could finally get a good look at those that were behind him. He could clearly see one witch but the other five appeared to be muggle soldiers. He was quite impressed, he had no idea there was more than two or three and keeping your movements silent in these wet tunnels was bound to be no easy task. He had one wand and five rifles pointed at him for nearly an hour before they were joined by another figure that he could not make out in the dark. After whispering with the others for a few minutes he turned his attention to Ron.

"Ron get your ass off that cold floor and lets get going." Said a voice full of amusement. 'I know that voice.' Ron thought to himself.

"Lee?"

"The one and only." He said with a laugh as he came into view. "Grab your stuff, it will take us awhile to get back." Ron rearmed himself once again and set out after Lee. When they caught up with the older boy Fawks fluttered into the air to settle himself onto Ron's other shoulder, away from Lee who found it very amusing but the phoenix found it anything but.

"Where are Fred, George and Bill?"

"George and Bill left about two hours ago to do some surveillance and Fred is currently trying to get hold of Fleur Delacour. We haven't heard from her in a couple days so he wanted to see if there was anything wrong."

"Fleur? Fleur is at Hogwarts." Ron said much to Lee's confusion.

"What the hell is she doing there?" He asked quickly with concern etching every word.

"There was an attack on Beauxbatons early this morning and she was hurt pretty bad. Madam Pomfrey said she would be alright though." With that said the two of them lapsed into silence for the rest of the walk as they turned down many different tunnels and avoided numerous booby traps. Ron was greatly surprised to see all the preparation his brothers had put into their little operation here as well as all of the safety precautions. They passed many people patrolling the different areas and he was quite confident that they could hold this area for a long time if they were ever discovered.

Two and a half hours after first arriving they entered a large well lit chamber that Ron assumed they used for their headquarters. Looking around at all the tables, maps

covering the walls and desks. Information reports from many sources throughout the continent, Ron could help but feel impressed all over again. Finally he noticed his brother George walk into the room looking weary. He glanced at Lee but seemed to not see Ron.

“Fleur is at Hogwarts. Apparently...”

“Yes I know. Ron just told me.” Lee interrupted with a grin. George’s head flew up and saw his younger brother standing beside his best friend and smile.

“Our little Ronnikins, all grown up and coming to help destroy people. I’m so proud.” He said with a fake sob, that is until he noticed Fawks. “Well hello to you.” The amusement and mischief in his eye could have been stopped by a three year old and it was really confusing to Ron.

“Ok, what is so amusing about Fawks?” He asked in exasperation.

“Well towards the end of the summer Dumbledore sent us a message with Fawks and when he arrived in his traditional burst of flames in the middle of our store he set some things off. So needless to say he got a full look at our inventory and their effects. Unlike us he doesn’t seem to find it amusing although I think he just holds the grudge because its fun than out of any real annoyance.” Fred explain with a huge smile. Fawks simple turned his back on him and raised his tail up in a pompous manner which caused all those present to laugh. After several minutes of simply joking about Ron sent a message off to Harry stating that everything seemed to be fine and that he would return shortly after George and Bill returned from their surveillance assignment.

Ron, Fred and Lee stayed up late into the night talking about nothing with any great importance to the struggle ahead of them. And that meant a lot of talk about quidich, pranks and teasing Ron about his relationship with Hermione. They were later joined by Katie and Alicia who had been out as part of a surveillance team at another sight. Angelina was still recovering from her wounds and remained in bed under a dreamless sleep potion. It was about an hour until dawn when everything seemed to go wrong.

The current topic of discussion had been Harry’s retarded decision to take Draco on as an apprentice when a weather beaten man in his late thirties entered the chamber at a fast pace and whispered something in Fred’s ear. His eyes had immediately shot open before he jumped to his feet and charged out of the room at a dead run with everyone else following behind in confusion.

Ron came to a quick stop as he turned the corner and saw everyone hunched over what, thanks to his father, he knew to be some kind of muggle radio. Fred was in a hurry as he flipped through the pages of a notebook that had a list of numbers and initials on each page.

“What’s going on?” Ron whispered to Alicia.

“Everyone of us carries a specially made portkey that will work only for us. But since it’s destination can be traced they can only be activated from here. For some

reason or another George and Bill are calling for theirs to be activated.”

“George what’s happened?” Fred called into the microphone.

“We’ll explain when we get there, just activate the god damn things now.” George shouted as you could hear Bill in the background firing curses. After coming to the page he was looking for Fred tapped his wand twice to two of the numbers and within seconds George and Bill appeared before them looking very disheveled and out of breath.

“So what the hell happened?” Fred questioned his twin urgently but before he could answer everyone was knocked to the grounds and a loud explosion sounded all around them.

Chapter Thirty: Families and Fights

“Are you going to tell us what the fuck just happened or not?” Fred almost yelled at his two brothers after everyone had picked themselves up after being knocked to the ground by the shock of the explosion. Everyone present was immensely relieved at the thought of all the charms placed on the tunnels to prevent cave-ins.

Both George and Bill were still on the ground, having simply moved over to sit against the wall, with their eyes closed and breathing heavily as everyone waited for an explanation. Slowly George opened his eye and began to explain.

“We were sitting up on our usual rooftop watching the activity around the docks. Everything seemed quiet enough until about an hour ago. Several Death Eaters began carrying several weapons containers to what was apparently a portkey area. So after the first shipment went out we made our way down and checked out a few of the warehouses. The first one we entered had already been cleared out, the second on the other hand...”

“The second warehouse was stocked full of magically altered muggle explosives.” Bill picked up. “Everything from that C-4 stuff to rockets and grenades. So we, umm, blew it up.” Bill finished tiredly. While everyone else looked stunned.

“You blew it up? It’s all gone?” Lee asked in a surprised voice.

“Yes, it, the warehouses, the docks and about three blocks in every direction.” George said with a thankful look on his face as he thought of how the Death Eaters had driven the people from their homes all around that area so civilian casualties from the blast should be at a minimum.

“How did you do it?”

“I’ll answer that question later right now we have another problem or rather a massive problem. Just before we were discovered nosing around we overheard a conversation between a number of Death Eaters. Apparently Commander Kull is even smarter than

we thought because he now knows the locations of most, if not all, of our bases in southern England, including this one. An attack could come at any time.” As if on queue the radio seemed to come alive with several overlapping transmissions at once, immediately catching everyone’s attention.

“Fred it seems that several of our safe houses are under attack but with the amount of traffic I’m receiving I can’t pick up their locations. They sound very desperate.” Announced the same middle aged man that had come to get them when Bill and George had called for their portkeys to be activated. Fred stood in silent thought for only about thirty seconds before jumping into action.

“Activate them all, get everyone here now!”

“All of them?”

“All of them! It is quite clear that we are done here, now we have to try and save as many lives as possible. Lee, I want you to get some people out to each of the arrival points in case they need medical help. Alicia, try to contact Neferatu, Harry or Neville, we need a way out of these tunnels. Everybody else, start gathering all of our intelligence reports and everything of value. Leave everything else. Well get started!”

After six hours of weaving powerful magic around Beauxbatons Harry, Ginny and Luna had returned to Hogwarts for a well earned rest. However Harry currently found himself deep inside the Forbidden Forest sitting amongst the trees. The moonlight filtered through the treetops to form an ominous glow on the grounds below. Ginny, who was crouched beside him, looked around with an uncomfortable look upon her face. However Harry’s eyes were locked with those of the figure crouched in a ready position across the clearing from their position.

Its large feline body was tensed up and ready for a fight. The silky spotted coat seemed to ripple as the muscles beneath bunched and tightened in anticipation. To most it would seem to be nothing more than a VERY large leopard but Harry and Ginny knew better. This animal was feared more than any other in the wizarding world. Most spells had no effect and its strength was immeasurable. If it chose to its breath could cause a virus so strong and deadly that many villages and towns in east Africa have been wiped out. How it got here, Harry could only suspect. No, this was no ordinary leopard, it was a Nundu. Suddenly Harry drew his sword and thrust it out to the side and drove the tip of the blade into a nearby tree, successfully blocking the path of the three standing figures.

Hagrid, Tonks and Colin immediately jumped in shock and shouted loudly when they noticed Harry and Ginny on the ground. Well they tried to shout but found that they had been hit with silencing spells. After Harry pulled them to the ground and removed the silencing charms he quickly asked what the hell they were doing this deep in the forest so late at night.

“Well I was bringing Colin out here to train his mind magic abilities. I figured Hagrid was trustworthy enough so I told him the situation and our unique brand of magic and asked if he could help us since he knows this forest better than anyone.” Tonks finished and Hagrid beamed at the praise.

“Well you picked a really bad time to show up.” Harry bit out.

“Why, were you and Ginny doing anything naughty?” Tonks asked with a grin.

“Yes Dora, we were doing something very naughty. We were about to go out and confront the Nundu that is right now eyeing us as his next meal.” This statement made Tonks/Dora go pale, Colin looked on in confusion and Hagrid’s eyes lit up with excitement.

“Now if you will please stay here and stay quiet, I have to see if I can do anything about this.” Tonks immediately objected to this.

“Harry you can’t. It takes well over one hundred highly skilled wizards to even drive one away.” She stated frantically. But it was too late, Harry had already stood up and left the cover of the trees and headed out into the clearing. As he walked Harry kept his eyes locked with the strange blue eyes of the Nundu. As he neared the center a growl from ahead stopped him in his tracks.

/Harry Potter! You are no human! What are you?/ This statement shocked Harry a little but he didn’t show it. That he knew of he could only speak to animals of the light or otherworldly creatures such as demons. But then he thought that a species is not inherently light or dark but rather neutral and the individuals choose their own path.

/No, I am not human. I am classed as a phoenix. I am what they call a Phoenix Lord./ Harry replied evenly. The Nundu growled in an even deeper tone.

/You lie! You are not one of the phoenix. I know of their power, whatever you are, you are not of this world./ Harry’s face had gone deathly pale and he had a very hard time to find anything to say so he just stuttered for a few moments.

/How, how do you know that?/ He mumbled not meeting the animal’s eyes.

/My kind know many things, including how you once saved a Nundu cub from wizard hunters. I am here to pledge my loyalty to you./ With that the Nundu stood from his crouched position and bowed his head. Harry could only stare in shock with his mouth hanging open as the Nundu continued. /I am called Antwin and myself and my kind are at your service./

/Uh, um, ok. Thank you. I don’t mean to sound rude, but I will talk to you later, I suddenly feel the need to lie down right now./ Harry said as he turned around and made his way back to his friends as the Nundu, Antwin, watched him leave in amusement.

“Harry, what happened? I thought you were going to kill it or drive it away or something?” Tonks asked as Harry was bombarded by many of the same questions from the others. Harry ignored them all and just stood there with a shocked and worried look on his face.

“Harry what’s wrong?” Ginny asked with concern evident in her voice.

“Nothing, he just came here to pledge his loyalty to me.” He responded in a far away voice.

“Then why do you look so worried?”

“Nothing Gin, its just something he said, don’t worry about it.” Harry ignored the questions and concerns that were being thrown his way and began making his way back toward the school, forgetting that he could have just apparated, with his friends trailing behind him in confused silence. By the time they had reached Hogwarts it was nearly dawn so Ginny dragged Harry into the Great Hall for some breakfast as the rest went to get some sleep. Due to the large number of people now residing inside the school the Great Hall had been expanded and now housed ten massive tables where there once was only four. Even though it was only just after 5:30 there were still a good number of people up and about, however they did not seem to be interested in their breakfast.

Confused, Harry along with Ginny scanned the hall quickly for any sign of danger. As he did so Harry noticed that most of the teachers, Aurors a good bit of the DA, were already awake and ready for their training. There was a small scattering of other students, parents and refugees, muggle and wizard, but most were accomplished fighters so Harry wondered why they all looked so nervous. He quickly got an answer to his unspoken question.

Standing in the center of the hall was a lone figure wearing robes of the deepest red, they almost seemed to be a cloak of blood. The man had his back to Harry and just stood there as if waiting. Harry had a pretty good idea just who this person was.

‘Neville, where are you?’ Harry almost screamed in his mind.

‘I’m in the hospital wing with Fleur, why?’ He answered in confusion.

‘I think Jericho just paid us a visit. Apparate down to the Entrance Hall and wait outside the Great Hall until I call you.’

‘You got it boss.’ Was Neville’s only reply as Harry brought out his sword in such a way that it would reveal his presence.

“I see that you have finally joined us.” Lord Maul said as he slowly turned around, the hood of his cloak covering his face. The two men stood at opposite sides of the hall simply gazing at each other, neither saying a word. The power and hatred that was radiating off both men seemed to turn the blood of those watching to ice. Everyone knew that if these two men waged war on each other right here they would be lucky if they could get out in time to survive. The silent staring contest lasted nearly ten minutes before Lord Maul decided to end it.

“It’s been a long time Gabriel!” He said causing mass confusion to all those who were listening. Harry, however, seemed to go white as a sheet much to the amusement of his rival. “And wherever you go, Uziel is sure to follow, so why don’t you join us?” Without another word spoken Neville entered the hall with a confused and VERY

worried expression shining in his eyes though his face remained as sharp and clipped as ever.

“Out of curiosity, how long has it been since your awakening?” Lord Maul asked Harry in a tone that spoke nothing of the evil he was spreading across the world. He sounded almost like an annoying psychologist trying to get a client to open up.

“What are you talking about?” Harry asked harshly.

“You may be standing in a room full of people you wish to keep the truth from but don’t think for one moment that I share your ignorance of the situation.” He replied shortly before taking a deep breath before walking towards Harry who had not even blinked since entering the Great Hall. As Harry watched him approach small distortions in Lord Maul’s form clearly indicated that the man was not really there, it was actually much more like a muggle hologram. /Don’t worry, he isn’t really here. He’s projecting his image from another location./ However he was more worried about how he received the information that he had. Lord Maul stopped about ten feet away from Harry and his friends before he began speaking again.

“You might as well put that sword away Gabriel. You know perfectly well we can’t harm each other right now, our magic won’t allow it. However,” he continued with an evil smirk. “The reason I am here is to deliver a gift.” He finished as he threw out his arms in front of him. All but Harry and Neville were blinded by the intense white light that filled the hall for no more than five seconds before fading. Though many still could not see they could all hear the cry of utter grief and rage that shook the ancient school to its very foundations and the heartless laugh that echoed throughout the hall.

As everyone began to recover their sight they almost wished they hadn’t. Lying on the floor with Harry’s arms around her was the crumpled form of Ginny Weasley with a dagger buried into the right side of her chest. Most had their eyes transfixed on this scene so very few noticed that Lord Maul had lowered his hood.

As he held Ginny tightly Harry’s burning green eyes were fixed on the insubstantial figure in front of him. Normally he would be what you could call a handsome man if you could overlook a certain, characteristic. That being the fact that he had no eyes. That alone could be shocking but the fact that they had obviously been cut out recently, eyelids and all, with fresh blood running down his cheeks served as a very effective terror factor for those who knew how powerful and skilled he truly was. Harry however, was far from shocked or terrified. He felt only hatred, disgust, and fury as Lord Maul’s, and by implication, Jericho’s true identity was revealed to him.

“Zamiel!” Harry ground out through clenched teeth as the figure before him faded into nothingness. A sharp cry from the doorway brought Harry’s mind back to the situation at hand. Looking up he saw Mrs. Weasley’s horror struck face as she raced to her only daughter’s side.

“Neville bring Mrs. Weasley to the hospital wing, fast.” Harry said before he vanished with Ginny while telepathically telling Tonks and Snape to get their asses upstairs.

Madam Pomfrey was quite literally scared out of her wits as Harry and Ginny suddenly appeared on the hospital wing floor before her. Even more shocking was the dagger protruding from her chest.

“Good lord, what happened to her?” She exclaimed as Harry picked her up and gently laid her down on the closest available bed. Quickly going into ‘nurse mode’, Madam Pomfrey began to thoroughly examine her as Harry swiftly, yet gently, pulled the dagger from her chest just as Neville arrived with Mrs. Weasley, who was quickly at her daughters bedside

“How is she? She will be okay won’t she?” Mrs. Weasley sobbed in desperation as Harry ripped open Ginny’s robes, exposing her bare and bloody chest, to heal wounds. She would never admit it, even to herself, but Ginny was always her favorite when it came to her children. After Ron was born she had all but given up hopes of having a daughter, someone she could spend time with and teach things to like she had done with her own mother. The thought of losing any more of her children weighed heavily on her heart since Percy was killed but the thought of losing Ginny hurt the most.

“I’m not sure, it is clear that the blade was poisoned but I don’t know with what yet.” Harry told her honestly with tears in his eyes as he held his glowing hands directly above Ginny’s heart casting several healing charms as one as one nifty monitoring charm that would send information of any change of her condition right into his mind. With a quick wave of his hand Harry washed the blood of her chest and covered her up just as Snape, Tonks, Charlie and Hermione burst into the room looking frantic and shooting questions at everyone.

“Harry, how is she, what happened?” “Is she going to make it?” “Why did he call you Gabriel?” “Why didn’t you do anything to prevent this? He was standing right in front of you and you did nothing.” This final outburst had come from Charlie and although Harry knew it was out of anger and concern for his sister, it still pissed him off.

“I did nothing, as you put it, because I couldn’t. He wasn’t really here. It was merely a projection.” Harry snapped back fiercely.

“But how is that possible Harry?” Hermione began. “If he wasn’t really here how could he attack Ginny that way? I’ve never seen or heard of any magic that could do that.”

“Well now you have. Now shut the fuck up Hermione, I don’t have the time or patience to listen to one of your lectures on theoretical magic right now. So either all of you keep your mouths closed or get the fuck out. It’s as simple as that.” Harry shouted without even looking up as the Marauders and Mr. Weasley entered quickly but quietly. Mr. Weasley was quick to approach his wife to offer whatever comfort he could. Blindly, Harry reached for the dagger he had placed on the bedside table and tossed it to an unsuspecting Professor Snape.

“I would greatly appreciate it if you could find out what the hell is on that blade for me Professor.” Before Snape could even nod in reply Harry had reached into his pocket and pulled out the now familiar tiny box that housed many of Harry’s secrets.

With an almost casual flick of the wrist the box was sent sailing across the ward and into the far wall where it grew to its true size.

“I’ve combined the potions lab and library. As soon as you figure out what you need get to work.” He said as he checked Ginny’s pulse. Snape nodded sharply and quickly passed through the massive doors with Tonks hot on his heels. Hermione, who was deeply hurt by Harry’s words towards her, decided that she would rather be at work to help her friend than standing around doing nothing. So she entered Harry’s lab as well.

After using a couple of scanning charms Harry sank into the chair behind him with an almost lost look on his face as Mrs. Weasley sobbed into the chest of her husband on the other side of the bed. Neville had come up behind him to place a reassuring hand on his friend’s shoulder when, for the second time in as many minutes, the hospital wing doors burst open causing most of those present to swiftly reach for their wands only to be frozen in shock.

“POTTER, LONGBOTTOM!” The booming voice the man used seemed to be out of place somehow. Though he was obviously very old, as a testament to his long silvery hair and beam, he was radiating with power and his eyes echoed his agitation.

“Merlin this is a hospital wing. SHUT UP.” No one was surprised at Harry’s outburst they were quite surprised and amused to see the ‘father of modern magic’ cringe under Harry’s stare.

“Um, okay, well, I will just speak with Mr. Longbottom then.” He said awkwardly moving quickly towards Neville who went to meet him.

“What’s going on?” Neville asked immediately.

“I need you to come with me right now?” Merlin replied in a harsh whisper after a warning glance from Harry.

“What, why now?”

“Because either you or Harry did something that has the rest of us baffled! Its obvious he isn’t going anywhere at the moment, where as you appear none the worse for wear. I can see that Miss Weasley is injured but this is very important.” The old man explained with seriousness and urgency dripping off every word. After looking at Harry and Ginny for a few moments Neville closed his eyes and nodded slowly, not liking the idea of leaving his friends at the moment.

“Take the Marauders with you!” Harry said much to everyone’s confusion.

“What, take us where?” Sirius almost yelled.

“Why? Would you like to explain what it is you did?” Neville asked evenly.

“No, I would not. However you are going to need their help.” Harry said with a mischievous grin before it faded and pulled his attention back to Ginny. Neville

simply rolled his eyes as he and Merlin approached the three mischief makers. Before they could utter another word both men grabbed them and with a pop, they were gone.

“Why did you send those three with them?” Mr. Weasley asked curiously. His daughter may be unconscious at the moment but he saw the look in Harry’s eyes when he suggested that they go. It was the same look that Fred and George had much of the time. And having been pranked by the Marauders many times since Sirius’ pardon, he was genuinely curious to what Harry had planned for them.

“You could call it a gift.” He smiled as Mr. Weasley asked what that gift was.

“A stroke probably.” Harry replied with a short laugh before Professor Snape came running back in with worry written all over his face.

“Where the hell are we?” Sirius asked in annoyance after walking through a constant mist for almost twenty minutes. Remus and Peter, although much more patient than their fellow Marauder, were getting quite irritated themselves.

“Somewhere no wizard has been for eleven hundred years.” Neville answered cryptically which only served as another annoyance factor. Peter was about to contradict this before he remembered that neither Neville nor Merlin were wizards but a War Mage and Phoenix Lord.

“You’re not really dead are you?” Remus suddenly asked Merlin as they were walking. Seeing the powers Harry had as a Phoenix Lord and his own knowledge of phoenixes suddenly got him thinking. When he had shown up at the presentation for the Order of Merlin awards they explained that Forge had brought him from the past, however when he showed up in the hospital wing Forge was nowhere in sight. And though a phoenix was not truly immortal, they did not die of natural causes, such as old age or illness.

“Hardly.” The old man replied with a smile playing out on his lips as Peter and Sirius looked on in surprise. “But that is not the reason we are here.”

“Why are we here?” Remus asked quickly before Sirius could say something rude.

“You see all this fog...”

“It’s kind of hard to miss.” Sirius interrupted but shrank back under the piercing gaze of all of his companions.

“As I was about to explain, this fog acts as a deterrent from prying eyes. It goes on for a number of miles until you reach the interior of the island where myself and the oldest mages, sorcerers and others live. After living for several centuries those with these uncommon forms of magic may eventually find their way here. So I guess you could call it a retirement home of sorts. No one else, muggles or wizards, could get even this far without one of us to bring you through.”

“Oookaaayyy.” Peter began slowly. “So, what’s the problem?”

“The problem Mr. Pettigrew is that several days ago two of our more, colorful, residents stumbled across a magical distortion within this shield. They found it quite by accident, it was well hidden. It took us sometime but we were able to lower the invisibility charms placed on the area to reveal a small cottage, one we are unable to approach.”

“A cottage? What the hell is it doing here? HOW did it get here?” Neville asked loudly as they continued to walk.

“Yes, a cottage. And I have no idea what it is doing here, however after a number of scanning charms we determined that the magic around came from either you, or Harry. Judging by his reaction and his apparent knowledge of why I was there leads me to believe that he is responsible for this. But since your magic and his is nearly identical you should be able to lower the shields around the area.” The group of five walked in silence for a further five minutes before the fog began to thin and they entered a clearing where nothing stood with the exception of a single small yet cozy looking cottage that was situated in the center of the clearing.

“We’ve had the mist pulled back so we could get a good idea of the area. The shields surrounding the house it’s self extends out about halfway from here.” Merlin explained as Neville approached the shields.

“Why were you able to lower the invisibility charms but not everything else?” Remus asked Merlin in confusion. Although he was standing in the presence of one of the most famous and powerful men in history, he was still curious and enjoyed any new knowledge he could get.

“Because those were ordinary charms, the others however were cast by Harry’s unique brand of magic. Their far more powerful and because of the unique magical bond between a Phoenix Lord and War Mage only he or Neville can bring these down.” After observing for several minutes and casting numerous spells he turned around with a bewildered look on his face.

“No wonder you couldn’t get in, it’s a time dilation field.” He said with confusion and a great deal of curiosity. The others looked at him with many different expressions. Sirius and Peter looked on with blank looks and Remus seemed to get excited. Merlin on the other hand.

“A WHAT?” He yelled, his voice carrying a great deal farther than he intended. “How strong?”

“I’d say about one to thirty.”

“What’s a time diameter thingy and what did he mean by one to thirty?” Peter asked Remus who rolled his eyes at his two clueless friends.

“Time dilation field.” He corrected. “What it does is either slow down or speed up time within the field. When Neville said one to thirty, he meant that for every year that passes within the shield thirty years will pass outside.” Peter seemed to

understand while Sirius just shook his head as if he were thinking that he would never get it.

“Well lower it so we can see how much trouble he’s in.” Merlin said sharply and Neville nodded and got to work. After approaching the shield Neville sat comfortably on the ground and began chanting in a low whisper the Marauders could not hear. After a few minutes it began to feel as if static electricity filled the clearing and seemed to run through everyone and everything. It was a very disturbing feeling to say the least.

“What the hell is going on?” Peter yelled over the humming and popping that sounded all around them.

“When bringing down shields this powerful there is bound to be a lot of residual magic as the shields weaken. The stronger the shields, the more magical activity.” Merlin explained before he quickly brought up a shield to protect them as a massive magical shock wave sped towards them as the shields fell, knocking Neville back almost twenty feet. After almost thirty seconds all the residual magic was gone and everyone ran to check on Neville who was slowly getting up.

“Holy shit, are you ok?” Remus asked quickly as his friends looked at him in shock for speaking that way. He just shook off their looks and concentrated on Neville.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Just a little sore is all.” He said as he stood up and looked around. “Well, we seem to have an audience.” He continued with shock and a little amusement in his voice. The others turned to see two figures standing in the doorway of the cottage, wands drawn, and surprised looks on their faces.

“Albus!” They shouted and came running towards Merlin thinking him to be the old headmaster. Merlin and Neville began thinking quickly as the Marauders’ minds were fast to shut down. As they got closer they realized they had been mistaken as to the old man’s identity. “Oh, sorry we thought you were someone else.” A tall thin, but shapely woman said. As of yet neither her nor the man she was with had noticed the three nearly catatonic pranksters.

“Quite alright my dear. I get that reaction a lot. I am Aberforth Dumbledore, I am Albus’ brother.” Merlin lied smoothly as Neville didn’t even bother to fight the grin that was spreading across his face. “And this smiling fool you see beside me is Neville.”

“JAMES, LILY!” Remus burst out, releasing the breath he was unconsciously holding, drawing all attention to the trio of pranksters. One in particular.

“YOU RAT BASTARD!” James Potter exclaimed as he lunged at the unsuspecting and still very shocked Peter Pettigrew. With his hands wrapped firmly around his ‘friends’ throat James began slamming Peter’s head into the ground. It was nearly a minute before Neville shook off his shock enough to break up the fight and pull James off the nearly unconscious Peter. Blinded by his hatred and anger over his friends ‘betrayal’, James had not yet noticed either Sirius or Remus who were looking on

with jaws dropped. However Lily had noticed them and what she saw confused and worried her.

Although he was stronger than most people she knew, Remus always seemed to be worn out and tired. Though he was still young he had already developed some grey hair due to the stress of his werewolf transformations. However, now these characteristics seemed to be magnified and though she hated it, she pitied him.

Sirius looked much the same except for a few deepened creases and his eyes. Within his eyes housed an eternity of pain and sorrow. There was still the mischievous twinkle that had always been there as well as the love he had for those closest to him but that pain frightened her. She was suddenly shaken out of her thoughts as James continued to try to get passed Neville as Marlin was helping Peter with his injuries.

“Oh for crying out loud!” Neville exclaimed in annoyance before stunning James. Before they could react Sirius and Remus were quickly stunned as well and Lily was disarmed as she raised her wand to fire a curse. “Mrs. Potter to answer a few quick questions, no we are not Death Eaters, I stunned those three to prevent any further outburst. No we don’t know why you were brought here. Now would you mind helping me bring them inside or would you like to talk out here.” Nodding slowly Lily carefully took her wand back from the man in front of her before conjuring a stretcher and leading James inside while Neville and Merlin spoke quickly.

“Well Harry left us with quite a mess now didn’t he.” Merlin stated angrily while crossing his arms like a petulant child. “Now what are we supposed to do?”

“We will tell them as little as possible for now. We’re treading on dangerous ground here so we will do what we can then pass it on to Harry. This is his mess, let him deal with it. Let’s get this over with.” Neville grumbled as he levitated the three remaining Marauders through the door.

Upon entering the cottage Neville looked around to see that it was much similar to the Burrow in ways of decoration but was still quite Spartan with only the basic needs available. It simply was not a place one would go to feel pampered yet it was still cozy. Seeing that Lily had obviously taken James to the bedroom to rest Neville merely deposited the three others on the living room floor before he and Merlin joined Lily at the kitchen table.

“Why do they look so much different?” Lily began after a long uncomfortable silence.

“I Promise I will get to that in a moment. Mrs. Potter, this cottage now stands on land no wizard or muggle has set foot in over one thousand years. So naturally the locals, who I represent, are very interested, not to mention worried, about how you got here. So we were wondering if you could enlighten us.” Merlin began quietly with a gentle voice much like Dumbledore was known for when dealing with his younger students. Lily was trying to fight her feelings at the moment. Right now all she wanted was to yell and scream and demand to know where her child was but was afraid to ask at the same time so she just began speaking.

“Just over six months ago we found out that Voldemort was us, more specifically he was after our son.” When she said this Lily had to fight back sob that she would not let escape her. “We were immediately placed under the Fedeliuss Charm to keep us hidden. But that rat over there betrayed us.” She screamed with anger while looking at the unconscious form of Peter Pettigrew. “Just a couple of days later was Halloween. That evening Harry Mansfield, a friend of ours from school, showed up suddenly and told us that Voldemort had found us and that we had to leave. We were so worried for our son we didn’t even think of how Harry had found us until I went to go my baby. He told us that we could take him with us but that we had no choice and had to leave. It was then that we realized that he must have been working for Voldemort but before we could even draw our wands a bright flash of light erupted within the room and we found ourselves here.” She finished as tears began flowing down her cheeks at a steady pace.

“Thank you, that does answer a great many questions. Now as to why your friends look so much different is quite easy to explain. When this Harry Mansfield person sent you here he actually made replicas of your bodies which were found in your demolished home leading everyone to believe you had been killed. Due to this, Sirius over there was a wanted man as everyone believed him to be your secret keeper.” Merlin now went into a detailed explanation of what the public had believed had happened that fateful Halloween night leaving out Voldemort’s back fired curses. Lily listened in rapt silence as Merlin told the tale of how Sirius ‘killed’ Peter and was sent to Azkaban that very day.

“Now that is what everyone believed happened, however beliefs and reality are often two different things. In reality Peter was captured the very night he became your secret keeper and experienced untold tortures before he finally broke. Another man, using Polyjuice, later framed Sirius. Only recently was Peter able to escape Malfoy Manor where he was being tortured on an almost daily basis. Sirius himself was just recently pardoned but I’m afraid they will carry the scars of their experiences forever whether those changes can be seen or not, they are still there.”

“Remus however is different. His change of physical appearance is due primarily to his Lycanthropy. This passed full moon was exceptionally harsh physically because he spent most of it in his human form. You see over the last two months Remus has been taking a new potion just before the moon rises to help. Later this month will be his third dose, after that the full moon will pose no threat to him. The wolf will simply be his animagus form.” Neville finished smiling at Lily’s shocked face.

Neville sat back feeling pretty good. He never was any good at deception when not in a combat situation but he felt he handled this quite well. He didn’t really have to lie, just leave certain facts out and exaggerate others. It’s never good to have a lie come back to bite you on the ass.

“Where’s my baby?” She asked quietly with her eyes on the floor as if expecting the worst news. Neville’s smile quickly faded and was replaced with a look of concern and near panic, not knowing how to handle this question. But as it turned out he didn’t have to.

“He is perfectly alright. He is staying at Hogwarts at the moment. Maybe we should wake the others up and go so you can see him.” Merlin’s reassurance and suggestion to go to Hogwarts immediately brought Lily out of her depression and a beautiful smile graced her face as she raced towards the bedroom to wake James and Neville and Merlin moved to the living room.

It took some quick talking but Neville and Merlin were able to keep James from killing Peter, well actually it took a shield around Peter to keep him from an early death but that is beside the point. While Lily explained everything to James, Neville and Merlin simply glared at the three other Marauders as if daring them to contradict their story, they wisely stayed quiet. After a few moments of intense discussion Lily and James rejoined the group before they were gone in a flash of light.

“Well that was slightly disconcerting.” James mumbled as they reappeared at the edges of the forbidden forest without Merlin. Upon looking out over the school grounds that laid out before them his jaw dropped in shock. Every direction you looked you could see numerous fighters training in many forms of hand to hand combat as well as magical dueling. What shocked the two newly discovered Potters the most was what appeared to be a firing range for the muggle soldiers to help in their training. “What the hell is going on?” James gasped as he looked on with wide eyes.

“Hogwarts has become one of the last remaining strongholds against the forces of darkness. Durmstrang has already fallen and Beauxbatons has been hammered pretty hard over the last month. All public government in Great Britain has collapsed, both wizard and muggle...” Neville had decided that he had to give them at least a little information before he turned them over to Harry since there was really no reason not to. However he was prevented from continuing at Lily’s shocked voice.

“How? Last I heard Voldemort didn’t have anywhere near the finances or followers to mount such a campaign. How has he been able to do that much in six months.”

“Voldemort, ha!” Sirius burst out much to the Potters confusion and Neville’s annoyance.

“The answer to that question is complicated. I will answer part of it on the condition that after I do you will ask no more until we find Harry so he can explain the rest.” Neville explained referring to their old school friend Harry Mansfield.

“Why can’t you simply explain it?” James asked. The War Mage had to take a few steady breaths to push down his annoyance.

“Because there is nothing SIMPLE about your situation and ours. Right now just thinking about it is giving me a headache. Harry is the one that sent you to that cottage a caused this mess so he is the one that is going to clean it up. Now, are we understood on the conditions?” Neville finished with steel in his voice. Lily and James both nodded quickly, not wanting the man before them to get irritated further.

“Ok, first off Voldemort was killed only to be replaced with a far more powerful dark wizard. While we were all concentrated on Voldemort he secretly gathered followers

in mass numbers.” For the next ten minutes he explained the current situation. He had debated with himself on whether or not he would tell them about the time dilation shield that they were placed in but decided against it since he would be talking all night trying to explain every point.

“Alright, let’s go. Harry will probably be in the hospital wing!” He finished loudly before casting a few wandless disguising charms on the two, since everyone thought they were dead, and led the way across the school grounds.

It nearly broke Lily’s heart to see the almost hopeless looks on many of the faces as they passed through the halls of the ancient school of Hogwarts. But as they passed everyone seemed to look at Neville with a sort of awe and respect you would not expect someone so young to receive. As they neared the hospital wing they could hear a commotion from down the corridor. Taking off at a run the group of six burst through the hospital wing doors to see a very... impressive sight.

It seemed that everyone in the ward had his or her wands drawn as Hagrid, Snape, Charlie, Arthur, Frank Longbottom and Draco Malfoy tried to physically restrain Harry. By the looks of the six men the altercation had gone on for a while now and they were making no progress. Neville winced as he saw Mr. Weasley tell Hagrid to hit him upside the head, which he readily did in hopes that it would help to some degree.

“My god!” Lily gasped as she saw the half giant knocked into the wall behind him from the force of Harry’s retaliatory blow that caught the friendly man on the jaw. “When did he get so powerful?” She asked quietly but received no answer.

“Well aren’t you going to help them?” Neville asked the three older Marauders with a raised eyebrow. All three men immediately went pale at these words and began sputtering excuses of why they couldn’t jump into the middle of a brawl at the moment.

“Nonsense.” He replied with a smirk. “Just get in there and distract him for a bit.”

“A bit? And just what will you be doing while we are getting our asses kicked?” Sirius asked angrily.

“Waiting.” He answered simply only causing further agitation from the three men. After a few deep breaths and many silent prayers the three Marauders jumped into the fray only to take several hits early on.

As the nine men tried to subdue Harry Lily watched as Neville stalked along the wall of the room and stopped at a position that placed him facing Harry’s left side. The way Harry was fighting off the attacks of the others in the room left her to wonder why he was choosing to attack from the side instead of behind where it would be much safer for him and everyone else.

Because Harry was fighting so many it was not much longer before Neville spotted his opening and began charging at Harry with a speed that one would believe impossible if they had not seen it with their own eyes. Hagrid had shook off the sore

jaw he received to come up behind Harry and grab him in a fierce grip. With Harry properly distracted Neville had no problem reaching him unnoticed, however the right hook that was landed on the side of his head was something that no one could fail to notice.

Harry was ripped out of Hagrid's arms from the force of the blow only to crash into Remus and fall unceremoniously to the floor with a resounding crash.

"Oh, that's going to leave a mark." Harry groaned as he rolled off Remus and snapped his dislocated jaw back in place. Satisfied that Harry was in no condition to continue his struggle, the others relaxed and began taking stock of their own injuries.

"Now, unless anyone has any objection, I think it is time I went and coughed up my spleen." Snape said through clenched teeth before leaving the hospital wing without noticing the two eldest Potters.

"Would someone care to explain just what the hell was going on?" Neville asked in a cool voice. Looking at the subdued, silent and even pained expressions on most of those present Neville was a bit surprised that it was Draco Malfoy that had answered.

"Apparently Professor Snape discovered that the blade Weasley was stabbed with was imbued with a poison that has no antidote. When he was told Potter obviously lost it, causing this impromptu battle royal." He explained as Harry pulled himself off the floor while spitting out the blood that had accumulated in his mouth.

"What was the poison?" Neville asked solemnly.

"Executioner's heart." Neville closed his eyes as they began to water. This poison attacked the entire body and caused a long and painful death. However there were a couple people that didn't even hear the conversation, and for good reason.

"WHAT DID YOU CALL HIM?" They yelled referring to Malfoy's use of Harry's last name. This outburst brought everyone's attention to the two figures standing just inside of the doors. Everyone regarded them with confusion and no small amount of suspicion since no one could remember seeing them before. Seeing this as the perfect opportunity to have a little fun, Neville waved his hand to remove the disguising charms he had used on the two and proceeded to make introductions.

"Everyone, meet James and Lily Potter." He said with a grin and in seconds Hermione, Mrs. Weasley and Professor McGonagall had all fainted while everyone else stood in silence trying to process what they had just heard.

"James, Lily, this is Harry," Neville began again while he walked over towards Harry who was currently standing on unsteady feet while leaning against the wall for support. The afore mentioned Potters were about to say they knew who he was, Neville continued. "Harry Potter." This final statement had the same effect on the Potters as the other had on everyone else. Although Lily did not faint she did go very weak in the knees and had to hold on to her husband for support. James just seemed to blink owlishly at Neville as if he were in shock.

“How is this possible?” Nearly everyone yelled at once after those unconscious were revived.

“You couldn’t leave that cottage, could you?” Harry spoke up for the first time. Both his parents nodded dumbly in answer. “The reason is because I placed a very powerful shield over the area something called a time dilation field. As long as it was in place no one could enter or leave. You had been there for six months correct? Well in the outside world just over fifteen years has actually passed. Despite what many people would believe, it is impossible to change the past, so I had to save your lives in such a way that would keep the timeline intact. And the only way to do that was to make sure that everyone, especially Voldemort, Dumbledore and myself believed you to be dead until this moment.” Harry was prevented from saying anything more when a loud screech sounded from the window causing all present to jump in surprise. Harry quickly allowed the owl to enter and retrieved the message tied to its leg. As he read his face seemed to grow more grim with every word until he finished and looked with none of his former fatigue or pain showing.

“Alright listen up!” He snapped until everyone’s attention was on him. “The Weasley twins have been found out. They have recalled all of their people to their main headquarters but an attack could come at any time so they need help holding off the Death Eaters long enough to evacuate everyone and all of the information they have gathered. Anyone willing to go speak up now.” Harry said loudly. The two remaining Weasley men were quick to volunteer as were Peter, Remus, Sirius and Tonks. After borrowing a wand from Professor McGonagall Frank Longbottom stepped forward to stand next to his son just as Harry’s parents stood with the other Marauders. Even though they obviously had little information of the situation, they were quick to help if it could save lives. Suddenly Harry was struck with an idea.

“Wait, Dora you stay here.”

“Why?” She asked indignantly as if Harry was questioning her abilities.

“I want you to start making a certain potion.” He answered with a grin as he snapped his fingers and one of his many books appeared in his hand. Flipping through the pages quickly Harry found what he was looking for and then showed it to his friend who furrowed her brow in confusion.

“Why this one? No one has been poisoned with unicorn blood.”

“Not yet.” He replied mysteriously. Suddenly it hit her.

“Oh, oh, good idea I will start right now.” She quickly grabbed the book from Harry’s hands and made a beeline for the potions lab to collect some unicorn blood and begin making the potion.

“Alright, let’s go hunting.” Harry said before a drawling voice spoke up from behind him.

“Not so fast Potter, I’m going to.” Draco Malfoy said. This simple statement seemed to shock everyone more than the sudden arrival of to people who were thought to be

dead for fifteen years. "Like you said last night Potter, I have the opportunity to bring respect and honor back to the Malfoy name, and I intend to take." He explained much to the surprise of nearly everyone present.

"Alright, I want Peter, Remus, Charlie and Frank to stick with Neville, the rest of you are with me." Suddenly Harry gave off a shrill cry and Fawks suddenly appeared in a burst of flames much to the surprise of his parents.

/Fawks we have to go help Fred and George. I want you to pop into their main chamber and warn them so they don't get jumpy and attack while we are arriving okay./ Fawks thrilled in reply before disappearing once again. Harry then drew out his sword as Neville did the same and in a flash of brilliant white light they were gone.

Chapter Thirty-One: Collapse of the London Underground

Fred Weasley was currently standing against the wall in the cramped main chamber of their underground headquarters. Fawks had appeared moments before and literally forced everyone away from the center of the room. Fred could take this to mean only one thing. Harry had gotten their message. Clutching his bleeding shoulder as his right arm hung limp at his side, he waited for him to arrive, and he didn't have long to wait.

When the group of ten wizards and one witch arrived for safety reasons and due to lack of time for long explanations James and Lily were once again under the effects of the disguising charms. Many of them looked around in shock at the people and equipment the twins had put together as they gazed at the hundred or so faces looking back at them in varying degrees of relief at their timely arrival.

"Fred!" Harry called as he made his way towards the injured Weasley twin with Arthur and Charlie right behind him. "Are these all your people?" This question seemed to bring a sad smile to Fred's eyes.

"No, these are just many of the wounded. Just before we sent off our messages to you, Neville and Neferatu, I ordered the evacuation of all of our other bases and safe houses. Many of them were already under attack. When everyone began appearing at the arrival points some were attacked by Death Eaters that had managed to slip in under our defenses. Those that are healthy enough to continue fighting are positioned in some of the deeper tunnels to give the wounded time to escape." He finished just before he began to sway on his feet from blood loss. Arthur and a few others rushed forward and gently lowered him to the ground before he fell as Harry turned to Neville.

"Neville open up a portal and start moving these people back to Hogwarts. You will move with your group down that tunnel on the left and start rounding everyone up to bring them back here. There are only two tunnels leading in here so we should be able to hold off any Death Eaters and prevent them from using the portal."

“And if we can’t? What if some of them get through?” Remus asked and Harry quickly looked around the room.

“Do any of you know everyone in this ‘operation’?” He asked loudly. There were a lot of muttering but no one stepped forward until two men, both muggle soldiers, made their way through the crowd.

“We do sir!” One of the men said. “I’m Lt. William Sharp. Sergeant Harrison and myself are primarily responsible for interrogating new members to reveal their true loyalties before they are exposed to anything that may benefit the enemy and periodic questioning of current personnel. We have questioned every man and woman working with us on numerous occasions to prevent leaks.” He finished stiffly. Harry could tell that the man saw the compromise of their base as a personal insult, and a personal failure.

“Very well Lt., start getting everyone out of here. Once you are on the other side the medical staff should already be on the school grounds. Have them look after you there. Any one coming through that you don’t recognize, give them two in the chest and one in the head.” Harry said while pointing at the man’s rifle.

“Yes sir!” He responded with a ferial grin before heading out.

“Alright get started.” Harry yelled as the injured moved through the portal. On Harry’s order Neville led his group to the left while Harry took the right. The group of six, Harry, James, Lily, Sirius, Arthur and Draco, swiftly moved through the dark tunnels stopping every so often to avoid some trap or another.

Even with the dire situation they were in Lily could not pull her eyes off of Harry. She didn’t want to believe it, couldn’t believe it, but she knew that this was her son. To live for six isolated months away from her baby to return to a world on the verge of collapse where the only hope seemed to be her GROWN son was like being stabbed in the heart. She had missed out on his entire life. And it was Harry himself that had done it. He prevented himself from being with his parents while growing up, why? He claimed that it had to be that way, but why? Why couldn’t it be different? It was quite easy for her to decide to ask these questions as soon as possible. She was so lost in these thoughts that she didn’t realize that they had been walking for some time now and had come to a stop. Looking around she saw that they were at a fork in the tunnel. After looking in both directions Harry looked back to everyone else.

“Alright we have no choice but to split up here. Sirius, James and Arthur will go with you. If you run into too trouble scream out to me with your mind, I’ll be listening.”

“Ok, we’ll go this way.” Sirius said while pointing down one of the tunnels. While he was doing this, Harry noticed something.

“What the hell is wrong with your hand?” He questioned seeing that his godfathers hand was swollen pretty bad and several of his knuckles were bleeding. Looking at his hand Sirius grimaced.

“I didn’t realize it was that bad. It happened while we were trying to calm you down.” He replied as Harry took his hand and began healing it before he looked in the man’s eyes suspiciously.

“Who did you hit, it sure as hell wasn’t me?”

“Do you need to ask?” Sirius growled before stalking off with a confused James and Arthur behind him. Both Lily and Draco looked at Harry questioningly.

“Who did he hit?” They both asked quietly.

“Snape, who else.” Harry sighed while heading off.

“Sweet Merlin, he has got to get over that childish rivalry. Even James has let it go.” Lily huffed indignantly which quickly stopped Harry in his tracks.

“For James it may have been a childish rivalry, but for Sirius it was pure hatred. Hatred of several betrayals adding up. Hatred is a powerful emotion, and not one that you can easily let go.”

“What do you mean? I know they played a lot of pranks on each other but...” She cut off her question as Harry resumed walking. As he walked he quickly sent out his senses and could not ‘feel’ anyone in their immediate area so he resumed talking quietly.

“I’m sure you know of Sirius’ family history? Well before coming to Hogwarts he and Snape were actually friends.” Hearing this both Lily and Draco almost tripped over their own feet in shock. Padfoot of the infamous Marauders and Severus Snape were friends. “Needless to say being sorted into Gryffindor did not sit well with the Blacks or any family closely associated with them. Their friendship did not survive the first week after Snape’s parents found out.” Harry kept his senses on high alert as he quickly explained how the Snape family forced Severus to sever any relationship with Sirius. Several older Slytherins quickly befriended Snape on orders from their parents to make sure he kept his distance from ‘that good for nothing blood traitor’. With ‘those’ Slytherins continually harassing Sirius, he quickly lumped his old friend in with them.

Snape however was a good deal like Sirius but although he detested his family and what they believed in but feared to show the defiance that Sirius had. His father was always one to punish any sign of weakness even in his own young children. In the Snape household the Cruciatus curse was an effective teaching tool. It was at his father’s insistence that he joined the Death Eaters during his seventh year.

“But you said Black had his reasons. From what you said their rivalry was much the same as ours was. Why would he hold on to it for so long, especially if they were both in the Order of the Phoenix?” Draco asked as they came to a dead end where Harry growled in annoyance and turned around.

“Because Snape killed his brother. Come on lets double back.”

“What? What do you mean he killed Sirius’ brother?” Lily asked horrified.

“I mean exactly that. Regulus joined the Death Eaters because he thought it would make his parents proud, which it did, but once he got in and learned just how far Voldemort wanted to go he decided to leave, realizing that Sirius was right. Well you know Voldemort, that didn’t sit well with him so Regulus was brought before him and he ordered Snape to kill him as a show of his loyalty. With Voldemort right in front of him and surrounded by Death Eaters, he did it. At the moment he had information that Dumbledore needed and killing Regulus was the only way to get it to him. Although he had no love for his brother and knowing that he would have done the same if he were in Snape’s position, he can’t let it go. The only reason he has not killed Snape so far is because Dumbledore prevented it and now I prevent it.”

“Speaking of which, where is Albus?” Lily asked curiously. Harry gave her a stony look for a moment as he tried to control his grief before he marched off without a word. “Oh my god! He’s dead isn’t he?” She quickly asked Draco as she moved to catch up with him.

“Yes! He was killed during an attack on Hogwarts during the Halloween ball. Potter and his friends were drawn out of the castle when Diagon Alley was attacked. Lord Maul himself entered the castle with some of his men and killed him.” Draco replied in an emotionless voice.

/Neville, how are you doing/ Harry asked, almost screaming in frustration. They had split ways with Sirius forty five minutes ago and have not come across anyone, ally or enemy. As they reached the spot where his team had split up he began to grow increasingly nervous and began to worry for his friends.

/We are doing alright for the most part. We have gotten into a few scuffles and Charlie has a broken arm and Remus as a pretty nasty looking cut across his back but that is the worst of it. We have found about forty fighters and they seem to have some minor bumps and bruises but are utterly exhausted. It seems everyone else was either killed, captured or had to escape using the man holes leading up to the street when they became surrounded. My father and Peter are up top now trying to round up those that had escaped. We’re heading back to the portal now. We should be there in about ten minutes./ Neville replied before cutting off. Still not able to shake his feeling of unease, Harry sent out his senses in a powerful and dangerous wave. Leaving his mind vulnerable to possible attack. Images flashed rapidly through his mind, images of battle scarred tunnels, lifeless figures crumpled on the ground. Then suddenly, without warning his mind was assaulted with images of a battle weary figure standing against hopeless odds and an overpowering enemy. An enemy whose magical signature he recognized. Harry’s blood ran cold as he turned to his two companions.

“MOVE!” Harry roared as he charged through the dark at an incredible speed with Lily and Draco trying to keep up.

James and Sirius were walking swiftly at the head of their ever growing band. They had parted with Harry some time ago and have met with stiff resistance. Nothing they could not handle mind you but resistance none the same. Along the way they picked up close to a dozen or so of the resistance fighters and had sent twice that number

back with wounded men and women. Many of them had to be dragged or carried back through the tunnels to the portal as they fought to stay with the group so they could help in the rescue of their fellows despite their injuries. Both men, along with Mr. Weasley were deeply impressed and proud of the people the two redheaded twins were able to gather to their cause and the loyalty and respect they commanded within the organization.

“Arthur, I could never have imagined that two mischief makers like Fred and George could have put this all together.” Sirius said in a tone that sounded almost like awe, causing the Weasley family patriarch to smile with pride.

“If you remember Padfoot, we did something similar in our day.” James pointed out while trying to reconcile with the fact that ‘our day’ was really a lot further behind than he thought and that things he knew to be going on have been done with for well over a decade.

“True, but there were a lot more of us than two and many of our members were influential enough to help us out in all the right places. But I would say the biggest difference would be the timing. We took some months to get organized, Fred and George seemingly did it overnight and on a far more extensive scale than we ever accomplished even after two years. I mean the two of them disappeared the night the whole of England fell and ten days later were getting regular intelligence reports from all over Europe.” James thought about this for a moment before nodding. Arthur continued to smile like the village fool as he listened to the other two men speak of his least ‘mature’ sons with such respect while their other companions that were close enough to hear simply grinned in satisfaction over all they had accomplished in so short a time.

“What’s he like Sirius?” James FINALLY asked. He had been skirting around the subject off and on for a while now but had only then grown a pair big enough to actually ask much to Sirius’ amusement.

“Well, you knew him as Harry Mansfield during our seventh year. He’s a good deal like that except now he is more reserved and a whole lot colder. He is not one you want to piss off. Everything he told us about how he grew up and the things he had gone through were true, the only difference being that they happened a number of years into the future and he used different names. With all of the weight that has been thrust upon his shoulders over the years I’m surprised he hasn’t snapped. That’s why I think Ginny is so good for him.”

“Ginny? Who’s Ginny?” James asked in confusion at the sudden new topic.

“Ginny is Harry’s Girlfriend. You know, the redhead that was in the hospital wing. She actually came to Hogwarts with Harry as well but she didn’t spend much time around us.”

“Oh, that’s his girlfriend? Damn, he certainly does alright for himself I must say.” James responded with a laugh.

“That’s just nasty James.” Sirius said with a fake grimace since inside it was killing him to keep his laughter pent up as he spied Arthur out of the corner of his eye.

“What is so nasty about that? In case you have forgotten I am only twenty one, she can’t be too much younger than that. I’m married to Lily and I love her dearly but that does not mean that I can’t appreciate the beauty of another when I see it.” James replied not knowing that the man standing to his right was in fact the girl’s father.

“Well actually Ginny is a great deal older than she looks but don’t even say anything to her about it. And I never said you couldn’t appreciate another’s beauty but you have to remember one thing when you do. Never say anything about it in the company of your wife, the man the girl is seeing or the girl’s father.” He explained with a wicked grin.

“What are you talking about? Neither Lily or Harry is here and I… don’t…” A picture of the unconscious girl seemed to pass before his eyes and one feature stuck out the most. The flaming red hair. “Oh shit!” He mumbled to himself as he glanced to his right to see Arthur looking at him with a raised eyebrow, his eyes dancing in amusement. He was about to comment when they turned a corner and the sounds of battle began to grow louder in their ears. Two men rushed forward to lead the group so that they could navigate the tunnels and avoid the traps easier while moving at a much greater speed. They did not know who was fighting but the sounds echoing all around them sounded fierce and desperate. Charging through the winding labyrinth of rock and mortar they finally turned one final corner and came upon a most unwelcome sight.

The narrow tunnel was literally filled with the bodies of dead and dying fighters as their blood was washed away in the red stained water moving around them. By the looks of things it appeared that the defenders were overwhelmed by man power and eventually fell. However the tight quarters played in to the defenders hands and were able to eliminate many times their own number. Unfortunately Mr. Weasley burst into tears as he laid eyes on the lifeless body of his oldest son Bill who’s blank hollow eyes reflected horror and pain which only the killing curse could produce. The only thing stopping him from rushing to his son’s side and never leaving was the scene taking place at the end of the corridor.

About fifty feet ahead of Sirius and the others was a literal mob of Death Eaters standing ready to attack. However between these two battle ready groups stood two men that were sizing each other up as they kept their guard up with their swords.

The taller of the two men had his features hidden beneath robes of the deepest purple that set him aside from the other Death Eaters who now wore Red robes. He seemed calm and collected and his nerves were under control. His stance and the way he carried his weapon clearly stated that he was an experienced warrior.

The other man however was a different story. While it was obvious that he had skill with his weapon he was clearly out matched. He was tired and winded from constant battle and was being worn down from the strain of blood loss from numerous wounds. One look in his eyes and you could plainly see that he was still standing and fighting off of pure anger and hatred. After one quick sideways glance at the body of his fallen

brother, where his own wand lay, he launched his next and probably last attack not realizing that their audience had grown.

“RON!” Mr. Weasley shouted in despair as he watched his youngest son attack his opponent in a frenzy. “AVADA KEDAVERA.” He yelled in fear and anger. Neither of the two fighters paid any attention to the incoming curse and for good reason. Long before the curse hit its mark it instead hit some sort of shield. For a few short seconds a dark green transparent dome revealed its self before fading again. Everyone looked on in shock which quickly turned to fear as they realized that they could do nothing to help.

The two men almost seemed to dance around each other as their blades flicked through the air at each other at such a speed that if it wasn't for the dim light reflecting off the blades it would have been impossible to keep track of the movements. Mr. Weasley watched in shock, pride and fear at skill his son was showing. Yet with all the skill Ron had it obvious to all those present that his opponent was only toying with him.

“I had no idea that he had progressed so far so quickly.” Mr. Weasley could not help but comment despite his concern. The others could do nothing but watch in awe and anxiety as the two warriors slashed and stabbed at each other with a frenzy. However one man paled in horror.

“My god!” he exclaimed causing many, including Sirius, to turn their attention to him.

“What is it?” Sirius asked quickly but judging by his pale face and looks of a few others he did not want to know the answer.

“That's Commander Kull.” He answered in dread for both Ron and everyone else that had stumbled upon this ‘duel’.

“Oh shit.” Sirius moaned. “Just our luck.”

Ron paused for a moment to collect himself after his latest failed attempt to penetrate his opponent's defenses. Breathing heavily he held his sword out in front of him as his arms screamed with pain and exhaustion. He knew that he could not win this fight and he also knew that he could not escape so he would do his level best to do as much damage to this son of a bitch while there was still breath in him.

‘Besides, I still have one surprise up my sleeve.’ He thought to himself as he briefly glanced at the studded glove he wore on his right hand. Looking across the way he glared at the man that had killed his brother with all the hatred he could muster. Even after more than twenty minutes of almost constant intense dueling the man had not yet begun to tire. Taking one final deep steadying breath he readied himself for what he knew would be his final attack. With a swift jump forward the two swords clashed together with a loud clang and a shower of sparks. Back and forth they went at each other with neither giving an inch. By this time Mr. Weasley had to fight to keep his teary eyes on the fight. A very large part of him wanted to turn away, not wanting to witness the death of yet another son. However he decided that he would watch his youngest son's last moment and remember it with pride as well as grief.

Then, as if trying to relieve boredom, Commander Kull knocked Ron's sword from his grip with a strong swipe before quickly reversing his blade and burying it into Ron's abdomen. Beneath the man's hood Ron could see nothing but a smirk before he backed off. Ron stood clutching his stomach with his head still held high in defiance.

Letting loose a short soft chuckle Kull stepped passed Ron and his blade flicked out again, slashing down and severing the tendons on the back of his right knee. Despite his efforts to remain upright he turned slightly to his right as he collapsed to his knees. Clenching his teeth in an effort to keep from crying out in pain. He lifted his head once again when several flashes from the shield drew his attention. Surprisingly what he saw put him at ease. Maybe it was selfish of him but he did not want to die alone down here with no one knowing what had happened to him. Due to the shield he knew that they could not help him but at this point that didn't matter. Looking in to his father's eyes he knew he was there for him. He was glad that his father was here to see him fight rather than give in to fear. True, it was a small thing, but no less important to him. He was prepared for his fate but he would try to delay it as long as possible.

"NO!" Mr. Weasley screamed as Ron fell to his knees. As one nearly twenty men and women opened fire at the figure taking position behind Ron's left shoulder. With his position, stance and mannerisms it was quite clear what he had in mind. Curses and bullets alike impacted the shield in an intense barrage that lasted for several minutes before they realized that no amount of firepower that they possessed would penetrate that shield. It took Sirius and James using all of their strength to hold Arthur back but he suddenly gave up his struggle as his eyes made contact with Ron's.

Within his son's eyes he saw many emotions. Fear, of what was to come. Happiness, of being able to see one of his family once more. Acceptance, of his fate. But also that defiance was still there. Looking over Ron's shoulder he saw his son's murderer raise his sword and preparing to bring it down for one final strike.

Taking his chance Ron flexed his right hand and extended the three razor sharp claws that appeared out of the metal studs on his leather glove. Using the last of his energy he reached across his body and twisted slightly and slammed the blades into the man's upper left thigh and hip.

Commander Kull let out an ear piercing shriek of pain as he clubbed Ron savagely in the top of his head with the hilt of his blade after wrenching the blades out of his body. Many of the Death Eaters threw a few curses at Ron after his attack but the shield also protected the two men from their curses. After collecting himself Kull raised his sword yet again, planning to kill the unconscious Gryffindor as his father watched.

As Mr. Weasley watched with horror in his eyes there was a strong commotion behind him that he ignored. If there were more Death Eaters behind him now he did not care. He had watched Percy die at the hands of Lucius Malfoy. Bill was now dead and he will soon see the death of his youngest son. At the moment he had no fight left in him. He was only pulled out of his sudden depression when a bright florescent blue light pretty much screamed passed his head and impacted the shield.

“GET OUT OF MY WAY!” Harry roared as he finally arrived at his desired location only to have more than a dozen men and women between him and his target. At first many were about ready to turn their weapons on him until the wizards among them realized who he was and prevented the muggles from opening fire with their guns. Harry struggled through the crowd and made his way forward with many different scenarios going through his head. Each more disturbing than the one before. He has lost many close friends over the years of his long life and it never gets any easier. How would Mr. and Mrs. Weasley take it? And Ginny and Hermione? ‘Stop it Harry, don’t think like that.’ He thought to himself. After throwing one young man aside he was able to see the scene unfold. As he saw the sword rise above the unconscious form of his friend Harry began gathering power into his right hand as he slowly made his way ever closer, waiting for his moment to strike. That moment came seconds later as the blade began its descent.

Sirius and James, who had just released Arthur, were the only ones still paying attention to the ‘execution’. Everyone else’s attention was now on Harry, or rather Harry’s hand. It had started rather small but as time passes and Harry’s chants grew longer and more complicated the ball of blue light that sat hovering just above the skin of his right hand grew to about the size of a softball. Seeing his opportunity Harry reached back and threw the ball of magical power with all his strength at the chest of the man standing over his friend. Sirius and James nearly threw themselves to the ground in shock as the ball passed by but Arthur hardly noticed. That is until it made contact with the shield. With a loud chime that sounded almost like braking glass the shield that withstood some of the most powerful curses known to man was ripped apart in an instant.

“WHAT?” The Kull yelled as he suddenly stopped to look up. One could just imagine the look of utter shock that must be on his face at that moment. His eyes wide as Harry’s curse kept coming at him even after the shield fell. With a sickening crack the curse slammed into the man’s chest causing him to drop his sword and sending him cart wheeling into the ranks of Death Eaters further down the tunnel. The man quickly pulled himself up off the ground and looked around wildly in rage for his attacker. When he spun around and met Harry’s eye he paled instantly. “GABRIEL.” He shouted in rage and fear before immediately he summoned his fallen sword and vanished with a loud crack leaving many confused about the significance of the name Gabriel.

“OPEN FIRE!” Harry yelled as he rushed to the body of his best friend and student. The ‘defenders’ had no problem with this order and complied immediately deciding to be shocked later when they had more time. The Death Eaters were not so organized. With the destruction of that powerful shield and the loss of their leader they did not recover as quickly. Those that did were still at the mercy of the constant fire curses and bullets. Any wizard can raise a shield charm that will block out many varieties of curses and hexes as well as shields that would deflect physical objects such as bullets. But it takes a great deal of skill and better than average power to raise and maintain these two different shields together. So at the moment the advantage belonged to the ‘good guys’ as the Death Eaters fell at an alarming rate.

While the firefight was going on Harry did his best to heal Ron’s most critical wounds such as the puncture wound in his stomach and a deep slash mark across his chest.

After doing all he could on short notice he picked up a rock and quickly made a portkey.

“ARTHUR.” When Mr. Weasley arrived at his side he handed him the portkey and told him to get Ron to the mediwizards fast. Within seconds both father and son were gone. Standing up to join the fight he noticed that the Death Eaters were regrouping and were starting to mount a strong attack.

“Everyone back up around the corner.” He ordered as they were being pushed back.
/How is it going Neville/ He asked his friend telepathically.

/Just fine, we have moved everyone through the portal so we are just waiting for you./
He responded in a bored tone of voice.

/Go ahead and head back and close the portal. I’ll send everyone here back by portkey./ Harry decided after several moments thinking.

/Are you sure/

/Yes, I am. Shut the portal and bring the roof of that chamber down. I am going to stop by Gringotts to pick up a few things before heading back to Hogwarts so tell everyone not to worry. By the way I ran into a friend of yours./ Harry continued as he herded everyone out of the line of fire.

/And who would that be/

/Ulfgar/ Harry stated clearly. Even through a telepathic link Harry could feel the waves of hate and anger radiating off his friend and it amused him how much they were alike in that respect.

/WHERE IS HE/ Neville roared.

/Tucked tail and ran. It seems as if Zamiel has brought his lieutenant with him./

/This is fortunate but it will make things difficult./

/Fortunate? How did you come to that conclusion/ Harry asked in a confused tone even as he shield himself from several curses while sending many of his own.

/It’s fortunate that he’s finally out in the open. If we can take care of both him and especially Zamiel, the ‘Fallen’ will be all but finished./

/With luck my friend. When you get back to Hogwarts and get everything under control I want you to contact the ‘Ashen’ and find out if anymore of our people are here, we could use all the help we can get./

By this time everyone had retreated to the relative safety of being out of the line of fire after moving back around the corner. With a wave of his hand Harry conjured a long metal rod and after chanting for a moment held it out for the group to take hold of.

“Everyone grab hold of this, it will take you directly to the Great Hall.” As everyone held tight a thought occurred to Harry and he changed his mind. “Wait, everyone but James, Lily and Draco grab on.” The three aforementioned people looked at Harry in confusion for a moment before backing away. Moments later after the portkey activated the three turned to Harry for an explanation as curses still impacted the wall across from them as if the Death Eaters were hoping to get lucky and hit someone while they tried to peek around the corner.

“We are not going back to Hogwarts Yet. We have to make a stop first.” Was all the explanation he gave as he produced his staff and with a single wave all for vanished from the tunnels just seconds before a reducto curse collapsed the ceiling.

In a flash of brilliant white light the four reappeared in a well organized if not Spartan office. The place just reeked of formality that even Draco could not stand it.

“May I ask why you are here and how it was that you were able to bypass our wards?” A harsh voice asked from behind them causing James, Lily and Draco to spin around swiftly with wands raised. Their eyes widened in surprise and confusion as they came face to face with a very stern and annoyed looking goblin that was sitting behind an ancient desk that was taller than he was. Harry however was more reserved.

“We have come here because I wish to make a withdrawal from my vault and I bypassed your wards simply because I can and I wish for our business to be discreet.”

“I see,” The goblin grumpily as he could tell that he would get no more information. “And what is your vault number?”

“One.” Harry answered and almost fell to the floor laughing when the goblin’s face drained of all blood and he fell out of his chair. One look at his companions and he could no longer contain his glee and let loose a loud bark of laughter. Both James was looking at Harry with both shock and confusion while Draco knew of his ‘master’s’ lineage he never really thought about all of the implications. Lily on the other hand was utterly confused which was a rare sight indeed. Everyone knew that the lower the vault number the tighter the security. She knew that the Potter family was well off but she could not understand why they would have a vault that would clearly be one of the most heavily guarded.

“Ye... yes s...sir mister Potter.” The normally steady nerves of the goblins failed him as he stuttered while he picked himself up off the floor. “I will return momentarily with the manager.” With that he nearly ran from the room as Harry casually lowered himself into the nearest armchair as if nothing unusual had happened.

‘I guess even the Potters were unaware of their heritage.’ Draco thought to himself as the four sat in silence for several minutes. ‘And considering she believes she is a muggleborn it is safe to say that Mrs. Potter is also unaware who her ancestors are.’ He almost laughed at the irony. Two people carrying around two of the strongest blood lines in the magical world, James Potter with the combined power of Gryffindor and Slytherin and Lily Potter with that of Merlin, and neither knew it.

Harry sat whistling to himself as he waited seemingly unaware of the looks he was receiving. James looked about ready to have a heart attack and Draco looked like the proverbial kid in a candy store at the thought of getting a look inside of such a vault. Lily for her part seemed calm but she was still confused. If it were not for her companions she would have only been surprised that her son would have access to such a secure vault but the behavior of James and the young Malfoy boy left her very curious as to what could cause two men from two of the oldest and wealthiest families in the magical world act in such a manner.

“If the two of you continue to stare at me that way you can just wait here.” Harry said without ever looking towards his father and apprentice. Both men quickly diverted their eyes and tried to find something to occupy their time.

“Soooo...” James began. “Not to be insulting or anything but it is not everyday that you see a Malfoy with a Potter.” He said while looking at Draco. He had been wondering all afternoon why Lucius’ son would turn away from the ‘cause’ so since he had the chance to ask, why not.

“You don’t see a Malfoy with a Potter,” Draco began with a smirk that both confused and annoyed James. “You see an apprentice with his master.” The effect of these words was exactly what he had wanted. James immediately fell out of his chair, knocking his head on a small table in the process, and looked between Draco and Harry in horror. Lily however had the most entertaining reaction.

“HARRY JAMES POTTER HOW COULD YOU?” She screamed in fury as she shot out of her seat and marched over to her son. “I don’t care that he is a Malfoy, I couldn’t care if he was the son of Voldemort, you have no right to enslave anybody in such a fashion.” She continued for several moments and Harry watched on in amusement. Draco was different. He decided then and there not to EVER say anything that may anger the red head in front of her in the future. The fire in her eyes, the volume of her voice and the waves of power she gives off is truly terrifying. James seemed to share Draco’s thoughts.

“Lily calm down.” Harry said in a firm tone that stop her dead in the middle of her triad.

“I have to find out how he does that.” James mumbled quietly to himself.

“Now, just because wizards in more recent times have abused and neglected this arrangement does not mean that I have done the same. Every one of my students learns EVERYTHING they must know and are not bound in servitude. They work hard and learn or they will learn the hard way.” Draco cringed slightly at Harry’s final words as he remembered his disastrous first training session which was nothing more than a glorified beating. He had collapsed into bed that night and passed out from exhaustion but had woken up with a new resolve to make the most of his situation.

“Wait, did you just say ‘every one’ of your students?” James asked in shock. “How many apprentices do you have?”

“Over all I have had nine, but at the moment I have only two.”

“Eight or nine? How in Merlin’s name could you have had the time for that many. I wouldn’t have had the knowledge, skills much less the time for only one at your age.” Both Harry and Draco smirked slightly at James’ mention of Harry’s age but neither he nor Lily noticed. “Who is the other one?” He asked curiously after he had taken a moment to compose himself. Both of the ‘elder’ Potters became instantly worried as Harry’s usual stoic features contorted in concern.

“You just saw him. He was the one that was fighting for his life in a battle he could not win while everyone else, including his father, was forced to do nothing but stand and watch. His name is Ron Weasley.” Lily and James looked at Harry in both horror and pride for a moment. Pride because it was their son that had trained such a strong fighter and horror because of the young man’s condition.

“You taught him all that?” Lily asked in a small voice.

“Yep, it really is amazing that he had never even held a blade until a few months ago. Ron’s primary strength is in non-magical weapons and strategy. Draco on the other hand, though he has grown quite skilled as a swordsman, his strengths lay in battle magic and potions. Myself, Dora and Snape are the only ones I can think of at the moment who are better.” Harry said honestly which brought a look of pride to form on Draco’s face at his teacher’s praise.

“Who is Dora? Is she your girlfriend?” Lily asked with smirk.

“No she is not. Dora is a five hundred year old sorceress. She is currently known as Nymphadora Tonks.” Normally Harry would not have dreamed of giving this information to anyone that did not know but he knew that they could trust James and Lily to keep it to themselves. Unfortunately he forgot about Draco’s presence for a moment. True he is magically bound and could not pass on this information but Harry was pissed off at himself for being so careless.

“That information is not to leave this room. There are less than twenty people alive that no about her and it will stay that way, even if I have to silence some of those people permanently. Do you understand?” Harry warned them grimly, the steel in his voice made all three go a shade paler as they nodded in acceptance.

“Wait a minute. Tonks is my cousin. She is the daughter of my mother’s sister. She could not possible be five hundred years old.” Draco nearly shouted after everyone had sat in silence for several minutes.

“No, she isn’t. Your aunt Andromeda is actually a friend of her’s. A sorcerer keeps their existence hidden by moving from one identity to the next throughout their life. They use simple charms or in Dora’s case her metamorphosis abilities to simulate aging and then fake their own deaths before moving on. It’s much easier to do however if you have someone to help you set up your new life.

After Andromeda left the Black family to live with her husband in the muggle world very few wizards had contact with her. As I said, they were friends and after Dora told her who and what she really was she was only to happy to help. A few charms and a

few forged documents later and young Nymphadora Tonks was on her way to her first year at Hogwarts with none the wiser, not even Dumbledore.”

“Why keep it all secret? What I mean do they chose to live their lives in secrecy? The magical world is full of different people with different powers so why hide?” Lily asked in confusion. Even after ten years she still found many magical ways to be a bit silly. Surprisingly it was not Harry but Draco that chose to answer these questions.

“They hide for much of the same reason the rest of the wizarding community has hidden for centuries. Only they are hiding from everyone not just muggles. Sorcerers and mages both have unlimited life spans for reasons unknown. Immortality is a gift many have sought and would do anything to achieve.”

“Like Voldemort.” Lily said in understanding but James shook his head with a look of distaste and shame on his face.

“Voldemort and many other self proclaimed dark lords have tried to learn the reason for their, lets call it ‘agelessness’ but the most damage has been done by the wizarding community in general. Sorcerers being captured and tortured to death for information was widespread. Six hundred years ago the ministry actually offered a bounty on any that were captured and brought in for examinations and tests. Tests that would eventually kill them. Unfortunately this bounty was never recalled so it is still offered and many are still on the lookout for anyone that may bring in the price.” Lily looked shock at the thought of even the so called ‘good guys’ turning against their own people in such a fashion and surprisingly even Draco seemed ashamed of how the wizarding world had persecuted its own citizens. Lily looked as if she were about to go off on some rant about peoples ignorance when another question came to mind.

“So if this Dora person is not your girlfriend are you involved with anyone?” She asked wanting to get all the information she could about her son.

“Yes I am. I’m sure you remember Ginny.” Harry said with a smirk. Lily sat with a confused look on her face for a moment before realization dawned.

“You’re kidding. She was from the future as well?” She asked in shock. While James did not remember her Lily actually spent quite a bit of time with the other red head and was a bit depressed when her friend had just vanished. “Well is she alright? Where is she? Can I talk to her?” She asked real fast in an excited voice that had left even Draco amused.

“She’s in the Hospital wing right now but she should be alright.” Harry answered with a smile. Lily was about to ask why she was in the hospital wing when the door to the office opened once again and a nervous goblin entered.

“Mr. Potter, sorry to keep you waiting. Are you ready to go?” he asked in a strained but strangely excited voice.

“Yes I believe we are.” Harry said as he stood followed by his parents and Draco. The Goblin approach pulling out an old brittle piece of parchment.

“I’m sure you remember the drill.” He said as he held out the parchment. Harry nodded and pulled out a dagger and pricked his finger letting the blood drip on to the parchment. It an instant that one drop spread out and seemed to envelope the parchment like a blanket. Suddenly a blinding white light flashed throughout the room and all occupants were gone.

“My god!” Draco exclaimed as he looked around at his surrounding. James and Lily could do nothing more than nod in agreement as they looked around with their mouths wide open in astonishment. The goblin stood off to the side, his eyes shining with greed.

“If you say so.” Harry responded as he started moving forward with the others quickly moving to follow.

The ‘vault’ they had been transported into was more of a cavern than a vault. A massive cavern. Everywhere they looked where literal mountains of gold galleons, silver sickles and bronze kunks. Scattered about these mountains of wealth were large caches of diamonds, rubes, emeralds, weapons and many magical objects that they could not even recognize. This single vault clearly held more wealth than any of those present could imagine.

“Where did all of this come from?” James asked in awe.

“Most of it has come from Hogwarts.”

“Hogwarts?” Lily asked in confusion.

“Yes, even today one eighth of the student’s tuition is paid to the vaults that were held by the Hogwarts founders. After some time Slytherin had his accounts transferred to Gryffindor’s name to keep his family from getting their hands on it. One thousand years of one quarter of tuition being paid into this vault is bound to create a small fortune. Plus I had transferred the contents of the Potter vaults into this one.”

“Why are we here exactly? You obviously don’t need money.” Draco asked as he looked upon the heaps of gold that they were just passing by.

“I need something worth more than all this gold. We also need to pick up some weapons for the three of you.”

“Small fortune?” Draco repeated in disbelief. This place probably has the same as all the other vaults combined.”

“Actually it is almost twice that.” The goblin corrected.

“Why would that scum Slytherin turn his finances over to his enemy?” James asked with a great deal of distaste.

“A great many things and people throughout history have been fudged over or distorted. Slytherin is no exception. He was not half the boogieman history made him out to be but I will explain that later.”

“So why are we here? It obviously isn’t money.” Draco said as they walked by the heaps of gold without even slowing down.

“We are here to pick up something more valuable than all the gold in this vault. We also need to get the three of you some weapons.”

“Weapons, what kind of weapons?” Lily asked with excitement. Twenty years ago weapons training was actually still taught at Hogwarts and Lily had become quite proficient with a quarter staff. The class was later dropped when Lucius Malfoy of all people convinced the board of governors it was both old fashioned and unnecessary. Truth be told Malfoy only took that position because he had recently competed in a dueling tournament and lost in the final round. To a muggleborn who had not picked up a weapon until her third year.

“We have all kinds. You are all very capable with a wand but I want you to have a back up weapon as well. Something that may throw your opponent off guard if they relieve you of your wand.”

“That makes sense. So what is it you have to get?” James asked as excitement colored his face as he waited to see what kind of weapons could be found in this vault.

“That!” He answered simply as they reached the back wall. Looking around the wall they saw a wide array of magnificent weapons.

“Wow! I have never seen so many styles of swords before.” James commented as he admired a particularly beautiful elvish made blade. And blades were not the only weapons available. There were also a large supply of archery equipment and also something else. A very large something.

“How in the hell did they get that down here?” Draco exclaimed as he surveyed the massive trebuchet.

“It’s called magic.” James answered with sarcasm.

“No shit, but why is it in a bank vault?” He shot back.

“Ok, I don’t have a smartass answer for that one.” James replied after thinking for a moment causing Lily to whack him on the back of the head in annoyance. “Why the hell is a catapult in a bank vault?” He asked Harry who was examining a tall wooden cabinet.

“It’s from the first attack on Hogwarts. Some rising Dark Lord thought it would be a good idea to get rid of the four founders and ATTEMPTED to lay siege to the castle. His forces were quickly crushed but Godric thought the damn thing was a thing of beauty so he kept it as a souvenir.”

“Oh, so what are you doing?”

“Making sure no one has tampered with this.”

“What is so special about it?”

“This.” He answered as he opened the cabinet doors. Harry could hear a collective gasp behind him as he stepped back to reveal a magnificent set of armor. The whole set had been crafted from polished steel. On the breastplate a phoenix was painstakingly carved and painted in a sharp lighting blue. The silver of the steel and the blue seemed to melt together in flawless perfection. On each wrist and shin guard a setting sun was portrayed in the same striking blue. Hanging on the inside left wall of the cabinet was finely crafted broadsword within a high quality scabbard. The cross guard was fashioned into a pair of phoenix wings that spread out four inches on either side and stretched halfway down the handle. The pommel of the handle was about an inch thick and circular and had a Celtic cross carved into it with small fig leaves engraved around the boarder into minuet detail.

“Magnificent.” James gasped as he surveyed the cabinet’s contents.

“Why do you need another sword?” Draco asked after he managed to pick his jaw up off the floor.

“Because no weapon, no matter who made it or how finely crafted could ever work for you as well as one that you yourself made with your own hand and magic. Merlin is perhaps one of the greatest craftsmen that ever lived but to defeat Jericho I will need my own blade.” Both Lily and James started at the mention of Merlin’s name but decided to ask about that later.

“Then why haven’t you used your sword to begin with?” Both James and Draco asked as one. All three were a little started and worried as a pained expression momentarily came across Harry’s face.

“Because there is nothing on this earth that frightens me more than that sword.” He answered with a sigh. Before anyone could question this he went on to explain with his eyes staring intently onto the sword as his eyes clouded over with grief. “As you, or at least Draco knows, I am a great deal more powerful than Merlin himself. When I first forged this sword and poured as much power as I could into it I was warned that it would take a great deal of time to get used to using a weapon that’s power matched my own. I was young, in comparison to my age now, and arrogant and believed I could handle anything. When I first carried it into combat I could not handle it and it nearly killed me. As a result a great many people were killed, including dear friends, and it could have been avoided if I had listened. I haven’t picked it up since.” The other three stood in silence as they digested the information. Draco actually moved himself further away from the cabinet. Unlike James and Lily he had seen his ‘master’ use his powers to his full ability and survive wounds that no mortal should. Any weapon that could so easily incapacitate him he would stay way from.

“Come on, we have to get back to Hogwarts and we have a great many things to discuss.” Harry said in a detached voice after an extended pause before turning back to the goblin the others had forgotten was there.

“Now I’m sure you know that there is a great many very powerful objects in this vault that could be used for, shall we say dubious actions.” He said in a strong voice that he

lacked moments before. At the goblin's startled nod of confirmation he continued. "If this vault is molested in anyway you as well as every other goblin here will experience horrors never seen before on this earth. Am I understood?" The others were shocked, not only by Harry's words and the venom in which they were spoken but also of the goblin's reaction. Each of them had seen goblins threatened in one way or another by wizards but they always seemed to take no notice of them as if nothing had been said. But this time was different. The goblin before them instantly went pale and started shaking slightly in fear of what Harry might do.

"However, if this vault remains protected until this conflict is over half the gold here will become the property of Gringotts." Instantly the goblin's demeanor changed from fear to greed as he looked around at the mounds of gold scattered about. Knowing how the goblins will take his words literally he continued. "And when I say gold I mean ONLY the gold galleons. The family heirlooms and anything else fashioned out of gold is untouchable. Do I make myself clear?" For a moment the goblin looked put out that Harry obviously knew a great deal about goblin business tactics but quickly recovered. After all he had the opportunity to make more money for Gringotts than has been made in centuries.

"Yes Mr. Potter, I understand."

"We will be leaving by portkey so may leave now." The goblin nodded curtly before pulling out a portkey of his own and vanishing. Turning back to his companions he was met with three incredulous stares but for two different reasons. James and Lily seemed concerned about Harry's threat while Draco was obviously thinking that Harry was out of his mind for giving away that much money.

"HARRY JAMES POTTER! How dare you threaten another in such a fashion." Lily screamed.

"You know nothing of goblins do you?" He asked calmly. James and Lily seemed surprised at this question but both shook their heads and Draco was raised by a pureblood bigot and taught that non humans were beneath their notice so it was obvious that he would also know nothing.

"Goblins respond to two things above all others. Greed and a death threat from someone they KNOW has the ability to carry them out and the will to carry them out. As I said, there is a great many dangerous items in here that the 'esteemed' Lord Maul would love to get his hands on. With a painful death hanging over their heads and the opportunity to get their hands on that much money they will sacrifice every goblin on earth to keep him out of this vault. Now it is time for us to get back." He finished as the others looked at him in astonishment and with a wave of his hand he shrunk the cabinet and placed it in his pocket and created a portkey out of a silver scepter that was lying on the floor.

"Lets go." He said and as the others placed their hands on it all four vanished with a flash.

Chapter Twenty Two: The Unknown History

After directing a strong burst of magic at the roof of the main chamber of the Weasley twins headquarter Neville quickly stepped into the portal and headed back to Hogwarts. As he appeared on the grounds of the ancient school of magic he found two rifles pointed at his chest. Lt. Sharp and Sergeant Harrison quickly lowered their weapons.

“Sorry sir.”

“No problem Lt. have you had any trouble here?” Neville asked as he looked around at all the mediwizards that were treating the many wounded members of the resistance.

“Not much sir. We had a few Death Eaters try to get through but we were able to take care of them before they could do any damage.” The Lt. answered as he waved his hand in the direction of five Death Eaters lying off to the side. “The medics were already here when we arrived and they immediately got to work but we lost three of the most critically wounded.” Neville nodded his thanks and began walking through the crowd to see if he could recognize any of the injured. He was both greatly surprised and greatly worried when he came across Mr. Weasley standing off to the side as he held his crying wife while looking on upon Madam Pomfrey as she worked quickly to heal Ron’s injuries.

“What the hell happened to him?” Neville asked in an urgent voice as he approached the two elder Weasleys.

“He was trapped behind a shield and was forced to duel with Commander Kull. He fought stronger than I ever believed possible but he was out matched the entire time. He was about to be killed when Harry appeared and blew away the shield. Bill was also killed.” Mr. Weasley answered quietly.

“That son of a bitch!” Neville swore under his breath before kneeling down beside Madam Pomfrey. Is he going to be alright?” He asked quietly.

“I daresay he will be. The severed tendons in his leg will take a few days to heal but everything else should be finished in a moment. I must say that Mr. Potter did a fantastic job on the puncture wound to his abdomen.” She said as she examined his stomach after healing his leg as best she could on short notice. “Mr. Longbottom could you please take him to his bed to rest. I will be by shortly to check up on him.”

“Yes ma’am.” He answered as he levitated his friend off the ground and began moving towards the massive doors of the castle with Arthur trailing along behind him as he consoled his distraught wife. As they entered the Gryffindor common room everyone turned to see who had come and everything went immediately silent as they saw the motionless body of Ron Weasley and the quiet figures of his parents. After laying him soundly in his bed he left the Weasley parents to watch over their youngest son in peace and left after promising to be by later. As Neville passed by through the common Ron he was assaulted by a barrage of questions asking about the condition of their housemate.

One stern glare from Neville silenced these questions swiftly and he was able to leave in peace as he headed toward the Headmistress's office.

After giving the password, 'periwinkle', He nearly ran up the stairs before knocking on the office door.

"Come in!" Neville heard from within the office. When he entered he knew that something was definitely wrong. Aside from McGonagall, his parents, Remus, Peter, and Lee Jordan were also in the room. Lt. Sharp and Sgt. Harrison had apparently accompanied Lee. After another quick look around he spotted the injured Fred Weasley sitting on a couch at the far side of the room.

"What's going on?" Neville asked slowly as he surveyed the anxious faces of those around him.

"We don't know but something big is definitely going on we just have no way of finding out what that is until George and Bill get back." Fred answered as he rubbed his eyes. Neville looked down at the floor for a moment before sighing and looking up at Fred.

"Fred, you might want to go to the Gryffindor common room and see your parents." Neville said in a low voice as he tried to look anywhere but in Fred's eyes.

"What happened?" When Neville looked as if he were not going to answer Fred asked his question again in a loud voice. Many looked at him in surprise at the tone he used with Neville but he took no offence. He sucked in a deep breath as everyone watched him closely. Not one of the people present had witnessed the duel between Ron and Commander Kull so everyone was deeply interested and concerned to know what had happened.

"Bill was killed during the attacks earlier today. Apparently George was captured and Ron is hurt pretty badly though he is expected to be alright." Neville then went into detail about Ron's duel and his injuries. When he first heard his brother was trapped and forced to duel Commander Kull Fred's face drained of all color but it was soon replaced with both pride and admiration for his younger brother's courage. "Your parents are watching over Ron in his dorm so I thought you might want to join them."

"Neville at the moment there is nothing I can do to help Ron. Bill is dead and beyond help. But I can still find a way to help George. I'll be damned if I'm going to lose another brother without doing all in my power to find him." Fred Stated in a firm voice as tears came to his eyes at the thought of his fallen and wounded brothers.

"Alright, so makes you believe that there is something big happening soon?" Neville asked after a few minutes thought.

"Because right before our bases were attacked Bill and George felt the need to blow the docks sky high." Lee answered in an irritable tone.

“They did what?” Frank Longbottom asked in confusion and shock.

“He means precisely that Sir.” Sgt. Harrison continued. “They went on a routine surveillance mission but had given away their position and risked their lives to destroy as much of that base as possible. Everything in a quarter mile radius of the blast was destroyed. There must have been something else going on for them to take that risk than just the moving of weapons but unfortunately we were unable to get a full report before the attacks began. Whatever the reason we have to find George as soon as possible if we are to find the reason in time to prevent any more damage.”

“Do you have any idea where they could be holding him?” Neville asked.

“If he is still alive they would most likely be holding him in Commander Kull’s headquarters. Unfortunately we don’t have any idea where that could be.” Fred answered in a strangled voice as he thought about his missing twin.

“Well unfortunately if Lord Maul is able to hide his whereabouts effectively from even Forge’s eye it is highly likely that Kull has done the same. I have an idea how to find him but we will have to wait for Harry to return.” Neville said after a few moments thought.

“Well now that all the excitement is finished would you mind returning my wand?” Professor McGonagall said with a smile as she held her hand out to Frank Longbottom who had borrowed her wand before they had left to help the Weasley twins. As an answer Frank merely grinned and tossed her the wand. The eyes of Lee Jordan and Fred Weasley instantly went wide as if they had just realized who was in the room with them.

“No offence meant but aren’t you supposed to be insane or something?” Lee asked in a shock tone as he and Fred looked back and forth between the two elder Longbottoms as Neville watched with a grin. After a brief explanation of the two Auror’s recovery Neville left and used the Marauder’s Way passages to get to his quarters in peace. With the discovery of Commander Kull’s true identity there were many questions that needed to be answered and one of the most urgent of those questions could only be answered by select group.

When he arrived in his quarters Neville removed his boots and long over robe and draped it over the back of the chair that sat by the fire. He then unbuckled his scabbard and placed it on the table before removing his sword with a strong grip and stepping into the exact center of the room with his face set in determination. Before he could make another move the door suddenly burst open and his parents stepped into the room with concerned looks on their faces. Seeing the look on their son’s face only served to worry them more.

“Neville, what’s wrong?” His mother asked seriously.

“What do you mean?”

“Don’t try to deny that something is wrong. There is something more going on than meets the eye.” She said with a look that clearly said that she would accept nothing less than the truth.

‘Shit!’ He thought to himself. He had known for a while that he would someday have to come clean with his parents at least, however now was not the time.

“I don’t have the time to explain right now, it would take way too long and there is something I must do. But if you can wait for just a bit longer I promise you that you will get all the answers I can give you.”

“Alright. I can’t say I’m happy about it but we will wait.” Frank said cutting his wife off before she could say anything. “Do you want us to leave?”

“You don’t have to. Just have a seat and be as silent as possible until I am finished.” Frank nodded and led his wife over to the armchairs near the fire where they sat and watched their son to see what was so important that he needed absolute silence.

Neville quickly tuned out the presence of his parents and cleared his mind. In one swift movement he turned his sword on end and drove it halfway into the stone floor, much to the shock of his parents. Slowly he lowered himself to his knees and gripped the blade of his sword tightly just below the cross guard. Breathing slowly, Neville closed his eyes and began to concentrate.

Almost like a raging storm, information and memories long since forgotten were passing through his mind as he released his occlumency shields and searched swiftly for the connection he needed within the vast well of knowledge his mind housed. Even with his expansive knowledge of occlumency and other shielding techniques the nearly infinite cache of information was damn near impossible to sort through and was down right painful to even attempt such a task.

As Neville’s face contorted in pain Alice wanted to jump to her feet and rush to her son’s side but her husband held her back. She looked at him furiously and prepared to scream at him for preventing her from helping her ‘baby’ when he quickly silenced her with a silencing charm and pointed in Neville’s direction. When she looked she became down right desperate to help him but Frank held her back. His body seemed to be in light spasms and his hands gripped his blade so tight that there was a steady stream of blood running from his hands and pooling on the floor. Both restrained themselves however as Neville’s body stopped convulsing and his face appeared to have relaxed as a strange sort of peace seemed to wash over him.

After what felt like an eternity Neville was finally able to get his thoughts and the rush of information under control as he finally found what he was looking for.

‘Ah Uziel,’ A powerful voice echoed with Neville’s mind. ‘It has been a long time since you last sought our council.’

‘Yes it has My Lords. Under any other circumstances it would have been a lot longer as well.’ Neville replied much to the amusement of a number of disembodied voices within his mind.

‘We have no doubt.’ A powerful voice chuckled. ‘Now what are these circumstances you referred to?’

‘As I’m sure you are undoubtedly aware we are in the middle of a war.’

‘Yes we are aware but as you know we will not intervene directly.’ Another voice said firmly.

‘Yes I know My Lord but that is not the reason for my communication. We have just now discovered that the new leader of Death Eaters is none other than Zamiel, and Ulfgar is right by his side.’

‘They have both come out in the open?’ Yet another asked in shock as many voices muttered to each other at this latest development.

‘If this is true then we finally have the opportunity to end this god forsaken war forever.’

‘This is all very interesting but what do you need from us?’ The original voice spoke up once more.

‘I need to know if there are anymore of our people here. With the situation as it is we could use all the help we can get.’

‘You know very well who is there so why...’

‘No that is not what I meant.’ Neville snapped irritably and then quickly apologized for his rudeness. ‘I was asking if there were any here who have not yet awakened.’ Neville asked in a more respectful tone.

‘Oh.’ Many voices said slowly as realization dawned. ‘Other than those that are already known to you there is only one other.’ One said with a chuckle.

‘Ah hell, I’m going to hate this aren’t I?’ He asked with a moan that only served to bring about a roar of laughter.

‘Yes my boy I believe that you will. What you must do is try not to take everything so seriously so that the two of you can get along.’ Neville could do nothing but groan as he realized who it must be.

‘Why is it that the lot of you find our interaction so fascinating?’ Neville grumbled.

‘Uziel, when you no longer have a physical form you must find new ways to entertain yourself. And watching one old friend play numerous pranks on another old friend is as good a hobby as any. Wouldn’t you agree?’

‘Whatever. Now where can I find him?’

‘Oh, he’s close by.’ Came the mysterious answer.

‘Great, that’s a lot of help.’ Neville mumbled to himself. ‘Can you at least tell how old he is?’

‘Thirty eight.’

‘WHAT! HE HAS NEVER LASTED THAT LONG BEFORE!’ He screamed out in shock.

‘Well there was a long period in his life where he was in a position that his rather mischievous nature could not get him into trouble. If it weren’t for that someone would surely have killed him long ago. But that is neither here nor there so it is a new record for him.’

‘I don’t care.’ Neville grunted before he continued in a more formal tone of voice. ‘I thank you for your time My Lords but I must be leaving.’ Before he could receive a response, Neville pulled his conscious mind back into his body and began the process of rebuilding his mental shields. After about a half hour of sorting his thoughts and memories he withdrew from his mind and opened his eyes. The first thing he saw was his parents watching him intently with concerned looks etched into their features.

‘Damn.’ He thought to himself. /Harry are you back yet/

/Yeah we just got back. I am just leaving the hospital wing from checking on Ginny. We’re heading to my quarters now./

/Good I’ll be there in a moment, we have a great many things to discuss./ He explained in a clipped tone.

/Alright. Like what/ Harry asked simply. He was very curious as to what had Neville in such an uptight mood.

/For one thing we are going to have to figure out away to find Ulfgar’s headquarters. Chances are that is where they are holding George and apparently he may have some important information that we are going to need./

/Alright./

/So how is Ginny doing/ He asked nervously. Anxious for his friend’s recovery.

/Still too early to tell. The unicorn blood has made its way through her entire system but it is still working to rid her body of the poison. If this does work curing a person of unicorn blood is very difficult, she may not survive the antidote./ Harry explained in both anger and anxiety.

/Yes I know/ Neville responded sadly.

Slowly Neville got to his feet and with a wave of his hand he healed his hands of the wounds made by his tight grip on his sword. Quickly cleaning up the blood that had collected on the floor and the sword he pulled the blade out from the floor and slowly walked over to his parents who had not blinked since he opened his eyes.

“Are you alright?” His mother asked quickly as she stood and took hold of his hands.

“I’m just fine. Cuts like that are easy enough to heal. But for now we need to go.”

“Go? Go where?” Frank asked in confusion. His son however did not answer in words he simply grabbed each by the shoulder and in what felt like a massive rush of air they were no longer in Neville’s quarters.

“Greetings!” Harry exclaimed in a cheery voice that was somehow strange to hear come from him these days. Frank and Alice quickly looked up at the sound of Harry’s voice and saw him sitting at a fair sized table as he leaned back in his chair with one foot resting on the table itself. Looking around they also saw Lily and James as well as the other three Marauders, Tonks, Hermione and that ‘Malfoy’ boy. The door on the far wall that led in through the Slytherin common room suddenly opened to admit Professors McGonagall and Snape. As Snape had left the hospital wing before their true identities were revealed when his eyes landed on the two ‘presumed’ dead Potters Snape’s eyes rolled up into the back of his head and he fell in a dead faint. James reaction at seeing Snape was almost identical but he was able to keep himself conscious. With a wave of her wand, McGonagall brought Snape back around and Charlie, who had just arrived helped him to a chair.

“What, how is this possible?” Snape demanded as he looked between James and Lily. Their youthful appearance did not go unnoticed by him.

“Mr. Potter was just about to explain that.” McGonagall said as she turned a stern look towards Harry.

“Alright, I’m going to start with bringing James and Lily up-to-date on my personal life. Everything that happened after they disappeared, so everyone else bugger off for twenty minutes or so.” Everyone slowly made their way out of Harry’s room leaving only Lily and James behind. The two sat at the table opposite Harry and were watching the ‘young’ man intently.

“Ok, October 31, 1981. Magical history remembers that as the day that Voldemort attacked and killed James and Lily Potter. Of course we know otherwise. After ‘disposing’ of two of his most powerful enemies, Voldemort turned his wand on the child that was prophesized to be his downfall. Your truly. But when the killing curse struck me it was rebounded off of me and hit old snake face instead. Instead of killing him however his spirit was ripped out of his body, a very painful occurrence I understand, and left to roam at will as a mere shadow of what he once was.” For the next fifteen minutes Harry related almost everything to his parents about his childhood with the Dursley’s, which seemed to enrage his parents a great deal. He told them about first coming to Hogwarts and his many ‘adventures’ with his friends. When he explained his training after his fifth year his parents were obviously proud though Harry could tell that they did not know how to react, and he could not blame them. It had been different for the Longbottoms. Though they have very little memories of their time in Saint Mungos they had at least aged along with everyone else. James and Lily were still in their early twenties, physically and mentally. But they were alive and that was all that mattered to Harry at the moment.

“And so here we are.” Harry finished. He looked on in satisfaction as his parents sat there gawping at him like a couple of goldfish. Granted some of the information would make anyone’s head spin but that made it no less fun.

“So Dumbledore was really my grandfather and I’m a descendant of Merlin?” Lily asked stupidly for what seemed like the twentieth time.

“And I’m descended from both Gryffindor and Slytherin?” James asked again and spat out the name Slytherin as if it were some rancid piece of fruit. Even with the knowledge that Salazar was really a good man would not wash away the dislike he had for the house he created.

“Yes you are.” Harry said with a smile. /Harry can we come back in now? Snape and Sirius look about ready to kill each other./ Neville’s almost desperate voice echoed within Harry’s mind causing him to chuckle lightly much to James’ and Lily’s confusion.

“Alright everyone is dying to find out how it is that you are alive so is there any more questions you have?” Harry asked politely.

“I actually have a lot of questions but they can wait for now.” James answered with a sigh. After a quick word Neville and the others filed back in except now Fred joined them.

“Aren’t you supposed to be resting?” Harry asked as he pointed to Fred’s bound right arm and shoulder.

“Sorry mate but I heard what had happened from my father when I went to check on Ron. It would take a great deal more than Madam Pomfrey to keep me from hearing you explain how the legendary Prongs is still alive.” Fred said with a grin.

“Legendary?” James asked Sirius in confusion as his old friend sat beside him.

“Yes Fred and his twin brother George could give even us Marauders a run for most inventive and daring pranksters. They even nicked our map from Filch’s office and worked out how to use it.”

“Really?” James asked in shock. “Impressive.” The odds of someone figuring out that the old ratty bit of parchment was worth anything was slim in itself but figuring out how to use it on your own is something else entirely.

“Harry where’s Luna?” Hermione asked as she looked around at all the people present.

“She is still working on the wards at Beauxbatons. If it wasn’t for all the excitement today has brought Neville and I would probably be there as well. Alright everyone sit down.” Harry said as he conjured more chairs for everybody. Everyone was quick to take a seat and turn their undivided attention to Harry as he prepared to explain how and why he did whatever it was that he did.

“Now, as I have told everyone here before, it is impossible to change the past.” He began confusing everyone since it was obvious that he had done just that. “Despite this it did not stop me from trying. To prevent being confronted by multiple versions of myself I was forced to come up with dozens of different plans to prevent Voldemort from killing James and Lily. Most involving controlling Death Eaters to get close to him. All of them failed. Finally I decided to confront him openly when he showed up in Godric Hollow that Halloween. I sat in the cold rain for many hours before I was suddenly struck by an epiphany.

No matter how many times or how hard I tried I would never be able to change things so that I could have the kind of childhood everyone else took for granted while growing up. But, there was still a possibility that I could save Lily and James’ lives.

As I’m sure they have already told Neville, I turned up at their home that night and warned them that they had to leave. In their hurry to get their son clear of Voldemort they did not question how I was able to find them despite the Fidelius Charm.”

“That’s true, how did you do that? Wouldn’t you have had to get the information from the secret keeper as Voldemort did?” Lily asked in confusion as everyone else was hanging on every word while Peter hung his head slightly in shame at his failure.

“Despite the fact that I was from another time I was still there, in the form of a baby. Since my past self was one of those being protected by the charm the wards recognized my magical signature and let me pass through them.” Harry answered and Lily nodded in understanding, charms always being her best subject.. “They were quite shocked when I informed them that they could not take their child with them and became instantly suspicious. But before they could do anything I transported them to a cottage where they

were to be isolated until the time came that knowledge of their survival would not damage our timeline.”

“How were they kept ‘isolated’ as you say it? What prevented them from leaving any time they pleased?” Snape asked in fascination. The almost schoolboy like curiosity the potions master showed in the situation had a few feelings disturbed. Namely James and Sirius.

“By liberal use of concealment charms to make sure that no one on the outside noticed them and tried to interfere and a rather powerful time dilation field. Surely you have noticed that they have hardly aged in fifteen years.” Snape nearly choked on his own tongue when Harry mentioned the specific shield he used and for good reason. Fred just stood there with a blank look on his face. It takes an incredible amount of power to produce even a weak form of the shield and it hadn’t been used in centuries.

“That is what I don’t understand. Why use the time field? Why not use something less complicated and more stable?” Neville asked after Snape coughing fit had subsided and Hermione explained to Fred what the time field was and how it worked.

“I chose that particular shield because not only would it keep them inside and others out but it would also get them through the experience much faster. Fifteen years of total isolation from the outside world can pay a heavy toll on a person’s mind even with another person with them. Six months, however, a three year old could handle.”

“Be that as it may, the biggest blow now would certainly be finding that their son is a full grown man. You have merely exchanged one extreme for another.” McGonagall pointed out.

“Yes that is true. However, whether or not I used the time shield they would still have returned to find me a full grown man only now they only had to wait months not years.” Neville nodded his head in agreement when he suddenly remembered something and began projecting his thoughts to Harry. McGonagall looked to be about to argue her point yet again but came up short when Harry’s eyes seemed to go blank.

/What do you need Neville/ Harry said, answering his friends ‘mind call’.

/What the hell are you doing/ He asked as he looked into Harry’s eyes.

/I felt like seeing what their reactions would be if I went sort of catatonic like Professor Trelawney. Now what did you need/

/I spoke with the Ashes as you asked./

/And/ Harry asked slowly when it appeared that Neville would not continue without prompting.

“What is going on with those two?” James asked Sirius as everyone in the room looked intently between Harry and Neville who were watching each other without blinking.

“Talking.”

“Talking? What do you mean talking? Their not saying a word.” James stated firmly as he looked at his best friend as though he had gone mad. Sirius merely grinned in amusement.

“You don’t understand, Harry is a telepath.” He explained.

“Nice.” James said slowly as he turned back to watch the silent conversation.

/There is only one other that is here./ Neville stated simply in a grumpy tone of voice that narrowed the field a bit when Harry tried to guess who it was.

/Are you going to tell me who it is or what/ Harry finally snapped after Neville remained silent for several moments.

/Oh no, they made me figure it out for myself so I’m afraid that you will just have to do the same./

/Oh goody./ He replied sarcastically as he racked his brain. There weren’t very many people that Neville didn’t like so that narrowed the list significantly. Of those few that Neville did not get along with one name stood out above all others and Harry could not help it as a wide grin spread across his face and a deep loud laugh issued forth from his throat which only served to annoy his former apprentice further. ‘This is going too be fun.’ Harry thought to himself.

/Where is he/

/They wouldn’t say. All they said was that he was close by./ Neville growled.

/Ok, did they give you any other information/

/Oh yes, they say he’s thirty eight years old./ Seeing Harry’s reaction got Neville thinking. ‘I didn’t look that comical, did I?’ He thought to himself as he remembered his reaction to that same piece of information.

“He’s what?” Harry said out loud as he stood up from his chair with his eyes wide open in shock.

“You heard.”

“How is that possible? He never even made it past twenty five before.” If they weren’t before everyone present was certainly confused now.

“I don’t know how but that is what I was told. Apparently something happened and he was out of circulation for a number of years. Other than that I know nothing about who he is.”

“Ok, so we know that he is nearby, thirty eight years old and has been ‘away’ for awhile. Somewhere he could get in no more trouble. What do you think? Do you have any idea as to who it may be?” Harry asked as he turned to Neville while everyone else watched the two converse back and forth about some that seemed to be important but the others had no clue as to what that was.

/Well we could use both of our fathers as possibilities since they were both out of action for a while but neither one of them fits the personality./ Neville continued switching back to mind speech. /While your father is a great prankster he is no where near the same league. Lets start with people who were long term residents in Saint Mungos hospital and even check if anyone here was in Azkaban for a... long... time./ Neville trailed off as he and Harry stared at each other for several long moments before turning their heads slowly towards the ex Azkaban escapee and Marauder, Sirius Black.

“What?” Sirius asked nervously as the eyes of the two most powerful men he had ever met bore in to him. The pair stood stone still for what seemed like an eternity while Sirius began to squirm around in his chair while under the intense stare coming from the two pairs of eyes that were leveled at him.

“Well this is going to be interesting. Care to do the honors?” Harry asked as he turned back to his friend.

“What? Now, right here?” Neville asked in a shocked voice that made the others, especially Sirius, nervous.

“We were planning on telling them anyway and now is as good a time as any. Besides its best to get it done quickly, he’s going to have to relearn an awful lot and train his body to take the extra strain.”

“What are you to talking about? What do you have to do?” Sirius shouted gaining the attention of everyone in the room. As an answer Neville withdrew his sword and it slowly shrank until it was nothing more than a long dagger.

“We are going to kill you Sirius.” Neville stated simply. Then so quick that it was hardly seen Neville reached out and sent the ‘dagger’ flying at Sirius at an impossible speed. His eyes widening in shock was the only action Sirius was capable of before the blade was buried into the center of his chest. Everyone immediately jumped to their feet and withdrew their wands as many screamed in shock while others, Neville’s parents, the Marauders and Lily look on at he two men in horror. The real surprise was Snape. Everyone would have thought that he would be singing and dancing over his dead enemy but it was he who rush to the fallen Marauder’s side while the others were to shocked for any coherent thought much less action.

“Harry, Neville what the fuck did you do that for? He never did anything to you.” Remus screamed in rage as he pointed his wand at Harry while Peter covered Neville.

“Calm down and we will explain.”

“Calm down? You just murdered one of our best friends in cold blood and you expect us to be calm.” Both Harry and Neville were prepared to respond when a choking sound came from the floor behind Remus and Peter. Everyone turned to see Snape quickly backing away from Sirius’ body as it was rising up off the floor surrounded in a light blue nimbus of brilliant light. Everyone’s jaws hit the floor and Harry even heard the tell tale clatter of a few wands being dropped in their owner’s shock.

“What the devil is this?” Remus choked out as he felt the waves of power rippling out from his friend’s body. Almost as soon as it started it ended and Sirius was slowly lowered back to the cold stone floor. As soon as the last of the blue light that had enveloped Sirius had disappeared Neville levitated him over to Harry’s bed and carefully lay him down after pulling his blade out of his chest. Everyone stared in shock and awe as Sirius’ chest rose and fell as he breathed and seemed to be in nothing more than a deep sleep.

“What the hell is going on here? Black was dead mere seconds ago.” Snape nearly shouted.

“Yes, what about it?” Harry responded vaguely knowing that it would get under the skin of everyone present given what had just happened.

“Well why did you kill him only to bring him back to life a minute later? And how the hell did you bring him back?” Peter asked quickly.

“For one, I didn’t kill him. Neville did. And secondly, I did not bring him back.”

“Then how is it that his is alive?” Hermione asked but was suddenly cut off when none other than Luna Lovegood stormed into the room. Upon seeing her face Harry and Neville knew instantly why she was pissed so the two ran in opposite directions. Normally this would not be a bad idea but unfortunately for them Harry, who was on the right decided to run to the left while Neville decided to run to the right. The obvious result is that instead of getting away they ran right in to each other and went crashing to the floor. A situation everyone found funny and they would have been rolling on the floor with laughter but they were still deeply confused about Sirius’ murder and ‘apparent’ resurrection. Luna however was not amused and marched up to the two.

“I gather from your attempted escape that you know why I am here?” She asked in a firm voice that surprised everyone. Even with her incredible fighting skills Luna still appeared to be off in clouds and very few things ever surprised her.

“Um... well, you see the thing is...”

“Don’t try to bullshit your way out of this Neville Longbottom you were never any good at lying.”

“But Luna we needed some unicorn blood to finish the potion for Neville’s parents and your unicorn seems like the natural place to go for it.” Harry tried to explain.

“Really,” She asked in an understanding voice. Harry nodded and sighed in relief. That is until she continued. “The why is it that you asked her for more just yesterday?”

“Um, that’s a tough one. But you see we needed it today. Ginny…”

“I know what happened to Ginny.” Luna snapped. “But that does not give you reason to justify what you did. I have asked you time and time again to leave her alone. You know how Annabelle feels about you and that she would give you every last ounce of her blood if you asked and you use that to get what you need.” (I think Annabelle is the name I gave to Luna’s unicorn companion but if I made a mistake please let me know and I will make the changes as soon as possible.)

“Is it just me or does it sound like a unicorn has a crush on Harry?” Remus whispered to James who nodded in agreement.

“Alright Luna I’m sorry it won’t happen again. At the moment we have more important things to discuss.” Harry said quickly praying to any listening deities to get her attention on anything else.

“Very well, but this discussion is not over.” She said firmly before conjuring a chair and sitting down.

“Alright before we explain what just happened with Sirius…” Harry was cut off yet again as his door burst open and a very pissed off Ron Weasley stalked in with his father right behind him. Harry presumed that Mrs. Weasley was sitting with Ginny. “For crying out loud has anybody ever heard of knocking.” He sighed to himself.

“How are you feeling?” Harry asked his apprentice and friend with genuine concern.

“I’ll be fine once I get my hands on that son of a bitch again.” Ron growled.

“After what happened earlier you plan on going another round with a man that was toying with you through the whole fight?” Harry said grimly. Many might have taken that comment as an insult but Ron and Draco both knew that when Harry made comments like that about their ability to defend themselves and others it was a fact. Ron knew the other man was far better than he was but he was angry and not thinking clearly.

“The man killed my brother and I will not give up until he pays.”

“That man could have killed you at any time. I’ll be damned if I allow an apprentice of mine to throw his life away for some vendetta. If you see him on some other battlefield you WILL keep your distance from him or I will make you wish he had killed you.”

“I’ll do as I please.” Ron shouted out in anger.

“You’ll do as you’re told. Tenacity can be a good quality in a fighter but sometimes you have no choice but to cut your losses and against this Commander Kull you have nothing but losses. The bottom line is YOU CAN’T BEAT HIM.”

“Well I can sure as hell try.”

“Really? Ron tell me, when you woke up and saw your mother what did she look like?” Ron’s face immediately turned white as he remembered the grief stricken face of his mother at losing her oldest son. First she lost Percy and then Bill.

“I see you understand. While growing up your mum was the only mother figure I had ever known. She has already lost two sons and I will do all in my power to make sure she doesn’t lose a third because he got himself killed because he couldn’t control his emotions. Make no mistake about it, if I have to cut off your arms and legs and seal you in a box to prevent that I will.” One look in Harry’s eyes and everyone present knew that he would have no problem doing just that and Ron nodded his head as he looked down at the floor to hide the tears that were forming in his eyes for the pain he knew his mother was going through. He loved his brother dearly and he mourned his loss but nothing could compare to a mother’s grief for a lost child. As he turned back to everyone else Mr. Weasley nodded his thanks to Harry for deflating Ron’s ego and probably saving his life by doing it.

“Now, as I was saying, before we explain what happened with Sirius there is something else that needs to be done. We need to find George.”

“And how do you plan on doing that? We have been trying for some time now to find Commander Kull’s base of operations and have been unsuccessful.” Fred asked with a downcast face.

“We are going to find it using you Fred.” Harry said with a smile.

“Excuse me?”

“I tried to contact George using telepathy but it didn’t work. Wherever he is it is obviously heavily warded so I’m going to need an extra boost.”

“And that has to do with me how?” Fred asked nervously as Harry stood from his chair.

“Everyone knows that twins share a special kind of bond. This bond is different for everyone and ranges in strength. The bond between you and George is very strong, which

is why you are able to finish each others sentences and seem to know what each other are thinking. It is almost like a permanent telepathic link between you two. Now, I am going to use my telepathic ability to 'tap' into your bond and strengthen it so that with our combined abilities we should be able to brake through any wards and contact George and hopefully find out where he is."

"I have no idea what you just said, but do it anyway." Fred said urgently. Harry merely nodded and walked over to stand behind him. Raising his arms up he placed both of his hands on the sides of Fred's head and closed his eyes to concentrate as everyone else watched on in interest. It took a while of scanning before Harry found the bond he was looking for and began pouring his magic into it. He could feel Fred struggling to keep conscious from the significant amount of power that was being used within his mind so Harry worked quickly to get what he needed.

Many miles away in London, a certain red head was roused out of sleep. 'What the hell was that?' He thought to himself as he looked around the cold dark room that housed only three other prisoners. All of whom were unconscious.

'George, can you hear me?'

"Fred?" George Weasley asked loudly in surprise as he looked around the room for his twin brother.

'No it's me Harry. And stop speaking out loud I'm only in your mind.' Harry replied sharply even though he was elated that it had worked.

'Ok,' George began slowly in confusion. 'Why do you sound like Fred?'

'Because I am speaking to you through Fred's mind. More specifically through the bond the two of you share as twins.' Harry explained.

'Right, whatever you say.'

'Alright George it seems Fred is about to pass out from the strain so I need to find out if you know where you are being held.' He asked quickly.

'The Tower of London. They brought me in through the 'Traitor's Gate' of all places if you can believe it.' George said with a chuckle.

'Do you know if there is anyone else being held?'

'Yeah, right here in the same room with me I've got Narcissa Malfoy, some guy I don't know and the Queen of all people.'

'Foolish woman! Damn it I told her not to risk it.' Harry swore when he heard Mrs. Malfoy's name.

‘So are you coming to get us or what?’ The captured Weasley asked in what seemed like a bored tone, as if he were help prisoner on a regular basis.

‘Yeah give me a few minutes.’ Harry sighed. ‘Do you know of any wards protecting the area?’

‘Yeah they have got some kind of weird shield over the whole area. When they brought me in the Death Eaters passed right through it as though it wasn’t there but I bounced right off and was thrown to the ground. The other Death Eaters held me there until another came and cast some weird spell on me and left. After that I was able to pass through.’

‘Do you remember what the spell was?’

‘No, sorry. I was still a little to surprised at being thrown to the ground to remember a long complicated incantation after only hearing it once.’

‘Don’t worry about it we will get you out anyway. Fred is about to pass out so I have to go.’

‘No problem, just get me out of here fast, these people don’t seem capable of holding a decent conversation and wouldn’t know a good joke if it was sitting on their face.’

‘Right,’ Harry said slowly before pulling himself out of Fred’s mind. It was refreshing to know that even while being held by Death Eaters George kept his sense of humor.

“That was weird” Fred said tiredly after taking a few deep breaths.

“Well, do you know where he is?” Mr. Weasley asked quietly.

“Yes, he says that he is being held in the Tower of London. The Queen and Mrs. Malfoy are being held there as well.” Harry finished looking at Draco whose face had gone deathly pale.

“We have to get them out of there.” Ron shouted.

“Not yet. George said something about a shield covering the area. I’m going to check that out now.”

“And what are we supposed to be doing while you’re gone? Just sit here and twiddle our thumbs while my mother is probably being tortured.” Draco said coolly.

“First of all your mother isn’t being tortured. Second, no you’re not just going to sit around. You’re going to sit and listen to Neville.” Harry said as he stood once again and made his way to the door.

“What?” Neville asked in surprise as he turned to Harry. “And just what the hell am I supposed to talk about?” He asked in confusion causing Harry to chuckle.

“You are going to explain to them why you killed Sirius and how he is alive now.” Harry said with a cheeky grin. “Go ahead and explain everything.” Neville was prepared to yell at Harry for dumping that on him when he suddenly vanished. Turning back to everyone Neville sighed when they all looked at him with confusion and even a little trepidation as to what he was supposed to explain to them.

‘Oh crap.’ He thought to himself as he prepared himself for a long story.

Harry reappeared near the outskirts of London along the bank of the river Thames. (Did I spell that right?) He walked for quite some time before the imposing structure of the Tower of London appeared in the distance on the other side of the river. With Commander Kull’s headquarters so close Harry decided to be cautious and cast an invisibility charm and a soundless charm over himself to avoid detection from any patrolling Death Eaters before he picked up his pace and moved on at a brisk jog. Before he could get much closer however he suddenly hit something solid and was violently thrown back several feet as a glare a red light flared for several seconds.

“What the hell?” Harry said out loud as he pushed himself up off the ground. Approaching at a more cautious pace he extended his left arm out to find exactly where the shield began. A few moments later he found it and was greatly disturbed. While his hand was in direct contact with the shield he was almost overwhelmed with feelings not his own. These feels were extremely powerful and ranged from Hatred to fear. But one characteristic was absolute in all of them. Pain. An unholy pain permeated through the entire structure and held it together as mortar would for any normal wall.

“What the fuck!” He exclaimed as he ripped his hand away in shock. The shield itself almost seemed to scream out in an unbearable agony as it stood erect and strong against any outsider. ‘Oh hell.’ Harry thought as he realized what it must be and where it came from. ‘Salazar isn’t going to like this.’ Suddenly his attention was pulled away from the wards before him as cries of pain and gales of laughter reached his ears. Taking off at a run Harry moved away from the banks of the river following the voices. When he finally rounded the foot of a building what he saw made his blood boil.

A group of about seven Death Eaters had apparently cornered a family of muggles in an alley and were ‘amusing’ their selves with them. By the baggage they had with them it seemed they were trying to get out of London and find safety somewhere else. The parents were obviously already dead. There were two children, a boy about thirteen years old and a little girl about six. One Death Eater held onto the girl tightly and made her watch as his friends tortured her brother. Before Harry could react to what he had seen a blinding flash of green light collided with the boy’s chest and he fell lifelessly to the ground with a look of pure terror carved into every line of his face as the Death Eaters laughed. With a silent growl Harry drew his battle ax and charged forward. Under normal

circumstances he would have used his sword instead or maybe just magic but he wanted this to be messy.

When all the Death Eaters turned their full attention to the little girl they were amused to see her staring up at them with hatred, not fear, as tears ran down her face. At the last minute Harry let loose a thunderous roar and he was upon the men before they could react. With one powerful swing his ax cleaved the man closest to him nearly in two before he began systematically destroying the six remaining Death Eaters that seemed more interested in running away than they did in facing an opponent that could actually fight back. It was all finished in less than a minute. Harry stood in the middle of the street where he had chased the last Death Eater and look down on his now mangled body. He could feel the blood that had splattered all over him running down his arms as he held his ax tightly while trying to gain control over the strong hatred he was feeling. At the moment he wanted nothing more than to slaughter every last Death Eater he could find in the most painful ways he could imagine. But he had more important things to do at the moment. Suddenly his mind cleared enough to the point where he quickly remembered the little girl. Turning his head sharply to the side and saw her staring at him with wide eyes as she stood so still that she almost looked frozen to the spot. Quickly Harry dropped his ax to the ground and tried his best to not look so imposing as he normally would to any six year old.

Looking her over quickly to make sure she wasn't hurt he was a little ashamed to see that she had been splashed with some blood while he was fighting the Death Eaters. Feeling a bit sick to the stomach Harry cautiously approached the young girl so he would not frighten her.

"I'm not going to hurt you, don't be frightened." He said in a calming voice as he held out his hands in front of him as he stepped closer. When he reached her he knelt down to where he was at eye level and began sending calming and reassuring waves of power toward her. Not as effective as a calming potion but hey, you work with what you have. Slowly she began to loosen up but still did not take her eyes off of him which he found to be very disconcerting. He reached behind his back and conjured a handkerchief since at the moment he did not think she needed to see any more magic for awhile all things considered. When he pulled his hand back the girl instinctively took a step back but stopped when Harry held it out to her.

'She must be in shock.' Harry concluded when she made no other move. Carefully he reached out and gently wiped the blood from her face. With a little 'hidden' magic and the help of the handkerchief he had her cleaned up in no time.

"Are you alright, are you hurt anywhere?" He asked gently.

"N, no." She stuttered out as she shook her head. "But my mummy and daddy are. And my brother." She continued as tears streamed down her face. After taking a brief look at the three fallen figures Harry lowered his head and sighed.

“I’m sorry but I can do nothing to help them.” He said sadly. “Do you have any other family, anyone that could look after you?”

“No, everyone else already left.”

“Do you know where they went?” She shook her head no then sat down and pulled her knees to her chest and cried. ‘Oh god.’ Harry thought to himself in panic. He could kill anyone you put in front of him but when confronted with a crying girl he didn’t have a clue. He lowered himself to sit beside her and placed his arm over her shoulders. She immediately stiffened up again but slowly relaxed. After some time her sobs began to die down.

“I wish they would all die.” She said fiercely. This statement caught Harry off guard and he looked at her in puzzlement.

“Who?” He asked in confusion.

“The wizards.” She exclaimed as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. “Everything was fine before they showed up. Now my mummy and daddy are gone and I’m all alone.” Harry was a little surprised at first by the hatred in such a young child’s voice but he could see her reasoning.

“Now why would you want that? Not all wizards are bad.” He replied softly. Apparently the little girl figured that if Harry fought with an ax then he wasn’t a wizard.

“Then where are all the good ones? Why are they letting this happen? Since they have shown up I have seen a lot of them but I have never seen a nice one.” She nearly shouted with anger. Thinking quickly Harry extended his arms and cupped his hands together and concentrated. The girl looked back and forth between his hands and face as if he were crazy. Slowly he opened his eyes again and smiled as he brought his arms back down.

“Well, now you have met a nice one.” He said with a smile as he opened his hands to reveal a small crystal figurine of a winged unicorn. The girl stared at the beautiful figure with awe until it beat it’s wings and took flight, then Harry’s last words registered in her mind. Harry watched the unicorn fly around them for a moment before it landed back in his hands. Turning back to his young companion he was surprised to see her pressing herself up against the wall as she watched him in fear. Harry closed his eyes sadly before shaking his head.

“I’m not going to hurt you. I’m here to help. As I told you, not all wizards are bad. Many of us fight against those who attacked you.” He spoke softly as he tried to reassure her. “My name is Harry, what’s yours?” He asked as he held out his hand to her in a friendly way. After some time of staring him in the eye she obviously came to the conclusion that he was telling the truth and extended a shaky hand.

“I’m Amy. They hurt you to, didn’t they” The question came as a surprise to Harry and he was left staring at her blankly for a moment before replying.

“They have hurt the ones I love a great deal and that hurts me. But their leader, he has hurt me more deeply and more painfully than anyone can ever know.” He answered honestly as his eyes misted over slightly.

“Well it’s nice to meet you Amy. Now we should probably get out of here, someone will come looking for that patrol sooner or later. And even if they didn’t, spending the night with dead bodies isn’t the best idea I could think of.”

“But what about my parents and brother?” She asked with her lips shaking as she took his hand and he helped her stand up.

“I’m sorry but we will have to leave them here. Those bad wizards are called Death Eaters and they will give them a far better burial then we could give them right now.” Harry explained as he led her out of the alley. Bending over he picked up his ax where he had dropped it with his left hand and picked Amy up with his right.

“But where are we gonna go? Those Death people are everywhere.”

“Well right now my main concern is finding a way into the Tower. Some of my friends were captured and are being held there but there is a big magical shield protecting it. I have to go see the man that invented it to find if there is any way around it so I can save my friends.”

“Well where is he, is it far?”

“Yes it is very far. But I have a way to get there very fast but we have to walk for a while so that the Death Eater’s leader does not detect it.” Amy just nodded and laid her head on Harry’s shoulder as he walked the deserted river bank back out of town in silence.

Harry walked for nearly an hour when he glanced down and noticed Amy was asleep. ‘Poor girl.’ He thought to himself as he thought of what she had been through and what she had lost within a few moments time. Slowly his rage started to build up again at the injustice of the world but he quickly pushed it back down before he let it go to his head. Looking around at their surroundings he decided that they had come far enough and he closed his eyes to concentrate. In seconds a blinding flash of light temporarily blinded Harry and when his vision returned England was gone and replaced with an area where the fog was so thick it choked out any land marks that may be about. Knowing he was in for a long walk Harry sighed and began his trek through the fog.

“Why did Harry leave you to explain why you killed Sirius?” Lily asked.

“First of all I didn’t kill him. As you can see he is breathing and his heart is beating.” Neville replied defensively.

“But he was dead. He had no pulse and he had a dagger buried in his heart.” Snape pointed out in annoyance. After all he was the one that checked Sirius’s body after it hit the floor.

“Yes well, I’ll be explaining that. And Harry left me to do it because he’s a pain in the ass.” Neville bit out earning him a chuckle from the Marauders and a nod of agreement from Snape. “Now before I begin I want a magical oath from all of you that you will not utter a word I am about to tell you to anyone else for as long as you live.” He said with a deadly serious look upon his face.

“You’re joking right?” Fred asked as he tried to think of anything Neville could tell them that would warrant such secrecy. Nothing came to mind.

“No, I am not. What I am about to tell you could cause SERIOUS trouble if the information ever got out. So you can either give me your oath or you can leave the room, knowing that you could not be entrusted with such information.” Slowly everyone stood up and raised their wands.

“I swear this oath on my very being that anything said within this room shall never pass through my lips again unless given permission by Neville Andrew Longbottom, to whom I swear this oath, under any conditions that he may choose to set.” They all said as one and for a brief moment Neville wondered how Hermione who was raised as a muggle had learned the proper formalities for such an oath. Then he remembered that this was Hermione, she knew everything. Ever since she entered the magical world she had a desire to learn everything so it should come as no surprise that she had learned this.

“Your oath is accepted and the conditions are few. First of all, even if given permission to speak of this meeting you shall never utter a word in a manner or setting where it can be overheard. Secondly, I share this pledge with Harry James Potter and Sirius Tiberius Black so they too can give you permission since they are also directly involved. BUT you shall not seek their permission until they are ready to discuss such things. Am I understood?” He finished firmly as he looked at every one of their eager faces.

“Yes.”

“Good. Now we are going to start with a history lesson.”

“History? What’s the point of learning about history?” Ron exclaimed but was quickly silenced by nearly a dozen pairs of glaring eyes.

“This is nothing like your normal history discussions Ron. There will be no goblin revolutions mentioned here. Now I will politely ask for silence until I am finished please. This will take long enough without constant interruption no matter how ridiculous some of this may sound.

“Now, a long, long time ago, in a galaxy far away...”

“NEVILLE!” Hermione exclaimed while everyone else looked confused at her outburst.

“Sorry, my rather poor attempt at humor. Anyway, long ago, back when humans still had not yet evolved into their present form the universe was ruled over by twelve beings known as the Allurians. These beings are probably the most powerful, physically and magically, that have ever existed. True immortals. They were also the most cruel, evil and sadistic. And with the control of the Demon Lords and their armies of demons they ruled over their given territories with fear, much like the Death Eaters. But unlike the Death Eaters they had no use whatsoever for the other life forms that inhabited the many worlds and realms. They merely kept them around for their own amusement. Much like a psychotic child would torture animals. They had the power to take life, but also to give life. They took pleasure in seeing how much pain a living thing could endure before it finally died. Then they would revive them and start again. This stale but sick routine lasted for many millennia. Countless lives and civilizations lived under the constant fear and terror of the Allurians. As all life does over time, some evolved into more powerful beings than they were before. The most powerful were the Elves, Elementals, Hergains, Tribarians and lastly the Phoenix Lords.”

“Wait, wait, wait.” Hermione suddenly shouted, drawing all attention to her. “I know we agreed that we would not interrupt but this is some very bad story telling. You say these Allurians were these all powerful beings, then where are they? And who or what are Hergains and Tribarians? And lastly I thought that Phoenix Lords were always human but you said they evolved before there was life on earth.” She said so fast that she seemed to be hyperventilating and Ron had to pull her back down into her chair.

“Hermione I know that above all things you crave knowledge the most but interrupting with pointless questions that will be answered in time will not get it for you any faster. Sometimes you just have to sit and wait. Now as a matter of fact your questions about the Hergains, Tribarians and Phoenix Lords are about to be explained but the other will have to wait for now.

I assume you all know what an elf is?” Neville asked sarcastically but every decided to ignore his tone and simply nodded. “Good and some of you will no doubt know that the Elemental are beings so in touch with nature that they take on the physical characteristics of one of the elements at birth and have total control of whichever element that should be. Their skin may be brown and rough like tree bark or their bodies may reach temperatures so hot that their own mothers could not touch them. The rarest are those attuned with wind. They are born looking very much like ghosts, nearly completely transparent and incapable of any form of physical contact. They make their homes on many different worlds and many realms, usually away from other races though they have a peaceful coexistence with the Elves.

The Hergains are now extinct, wiped out by the Allurians when they destroyed their home world of Eratison. They were a race of beings that looked like a cross between a human bodybuilder and a lizard. They were large and bulky and had a very reptilian quality to them but were extremely powerful physically. Unlike the other they were

incapable of using magic of any kind but were immune to a large varieties and styles of magic. Despite their almost frightening appearance and their prowess in battle they were an extremely intelligent, kind and resourceful people.

The Tribarians are a race of hermits that inhabit a galaxy far from here. Little is known of them since they prefer to keep to themselves and like to keep their full potential hidden from others, even among their own kind. They are much the same as the wizards here on earth except they have never known the hindrance of having to use a wand. Their magic is very strong but their bodies are extremely frail in comparison to others which is why they prefer their seclusion. If no one else is around then the chances of an accident which could lead to serious injury or even death is greatly decreased.

Now we have the Phoenix Lords. They look like humans except for the fact that they have a massive set of wings on their back and are the strongest of the all the races I just described to you. They originally came from a world that was being eradicated by the Allurians because they believed that the Phoenix Lords were somehow a threat to their dominion over the universe. Many escaped when they were able to open a portal to a realm close to where the Elves now make their home. Temporarily out from underfoot of their oppressors they slowly began to learn the full power of their capabilities. For centuries they thrived, learning more about themselves with each passing day. When the Allurians finally found them and attacked with their demon armies they made the intelligent decision and ran, hoping to find a new home. However they were always only one step ahead and lived in fear of being discovered.

Finally they came to the decision that they would run no further. Many of those among them here tired of living in fear and were ready to simply run in and fight but cooler heads prevailed and it was agreed that they would first ally themselves with anyone who was ready to be rid of the Allurians once and for all. The Elves, Elemental and Hergains were the first to pledge their full support. While most refused to join their cause at the beginning many reconsidered after even the secluded people of the Tribarians agreed to join with the Phoenix Lords in their fight.

Battles raged on countless worlds as their people fought ferociously against the demon foot soldiers in the hopes of driving them away for good but it seemed to be an unattainable goal. While their fighters had both the skill and will to face their enemies their weapons were not strong enough to do much damage to the strongest of the demons and as a result they were driven back at almost every turn. That is until the Elves found a way of crafting a blade so that it contained enough power to not only injure and kill a demon but also the Demon Lords.

When their demon servants began to lose ground the Allurians, who up until this time found the conflict entertaining, took up an active roll. Despite the growing success against the demons they were no match for the power the Allurians had at their disposal. Whole worlds were wiped away as they 'purged' the universe of those that would challenge their rule. The Hergains were eradicated during this time. Everywhere they had once gained ground, they were now being decimated.

Powerless against such a strong enemy the Phoenix Lords, led by Orilla, turned over control of the armies to the Elves as they actively sought out any knowledge that could help them in defeating an enemy that could not be killed. For years they covered every inch of the universe for any sign of a means to achieve their ultimate goal and finally they found it, right here on earth. As those who actually pay attention in History of Magic knows the earliest forms of magic on earth were used by the native tribes of Australia tens of thousands of years ago. Centuries before any form of organized civilization was dreamed of. These primitive people had no idea what magic was or how it was accomplished so when something strange happened it was accredited to ghosts or demons. Most of their magic was accidental and based on their emotions like any magical child today. When the Phoenix Lord Simon came across these people in his search he determined that they could be of no help and prepared to move on, until that saw him.

Naturally the primitive natives who were hiding in the trees were frightened by his willful use of magic while getting his things together. They obviously believed that he was some kind of demon that had been sent to destroy them. The next thing Simon knew was that he was being thrown through the air after an incredible force collided with the shield that he had cast as a precaution. Being the ever cautious fellow he cast several more shield charms about himself and tried to find out what had happened. Figuring the natives had something to do with it he observed them secretly for many months and learned a great deal about their ways and beliefs.

What you have to understand is that every other culture the Phoenix Lords had been in contact with had always had at least some control over magic so accidental magic was almost unheard of. And magic based upon emotions was unknown. In their fear of an enemy they were able to send out a magical wave that could have killed Simon had he not protected himself with a shield at all times. So it stands to reason, does it not, that if emotions could help power one type of magic then they could help power others.

Returning to his leaders with this possibility it was decided that they had nothing to lose by looking into it further. During one of numerous battles the Elves had captured a great number of Demons that they were using basically as guinea pigs to find a counter to the power and immortality of the Allurians. After much experimentation they were able to confine the captured demons in a kind of shell that took the demons outside of normal space and was made stronger by their own power. It was determined that if they could somehow 'capture' the Allurians in a similar fashion then the vast power they had would work against them making their prison even stronger. The only problem was getting all twelve of them into the same place and the power it would take to create a shell large enough. The opportunity arose when Orilla was captured. As leader of the Phoenix Lords and other races she was a valuable prisoner. Through a strong telepathic link with her son Uziel she was able to resist the unrelenting and brutal torture that was heaped upon her by sending much of the pain to him while he instructed her on what information to give up." Neville explained with a slight hitch in his throat but no one noticed. Everyone listened in rapt attention to every word he was saying and their ears perked up even more when they heard the name Uziel, a name that Lord Maul had referred to Neville as.

“Orilla passed on the information of where the Phoenix Lords could be found as well as the current locations of the Elves and Elementals. As their strongest adversaries the Allurians were sure to come after the Phoenix Lords first. And that is exactly what they did. When they arrived they were surprised and delighted to find the entire forces of those opposing them present. With literally millions of people in the area they planned to entertain themselves for a long time. Ready to see some blood shed they quickly summoned their demon armies and the slaughter began with the Elves leading the assault. The Phoenix Lords were nowhere to be found. For days on end the countryside was a war zone as both sides were prepared to fight to the last man to earn this victory.

Believing the Phoenix Lords had run away like cowards, the Allurians made themselves comfortable at the edge of the cliff they stood on and watched the battle below as though it were something as innocent as a football game. However not far away, in fact very close by, an unseen enemy was working tirelessly to make their dream a reality.

For several days the Phoenix Lords remained hidden under the most powerful invisibility shields they could muster as they used all their power create a prison from which there was no escape. Into the shell they poured all of their love, respect and pride for their people and for those who fight along side of them, everything the Allurians are not. Finally on the six day of battle, when both armies were had lost more than half their number and were ready to give up in exhaustion they were ready and the Phoenix Lords dropped their invisibility shields.

Without warning an entire army of thousands upon thousands of Phoenix Lords appeared not one hundred yards from their mortal enemies. As one they began a long and complicated incantation that would wrap their shell around the Allurians and seal them away for all time. An incantation that would surely kill many of them from the extreme use of power it demands. Momentarily shocked at the sudden appearance of the enemy that they had long since believed to have run away, the Allurians merely stared in surprise and confusion at what they were doing. Surely they did not believe themselves to be powerful enough to confront them. And if so why did they not attack.

After several moments the tyrant’s surprise was turned to pleasure as many of the Phoenix Lords began to collapse one by one from magical exhaustion and strain. However when the chanting reached its peak they grew weary of the constant distraction from the battle and prepared to eliminate the annoying pests. But before they could react a brilliant golden light burst forth from those of the Phoenix Lords that had not succumbed to the massive power flows and encompassed the shocked and ‘terrified’ Allurians. The golden light surrounded them in gigantic sphere that slowly began collapsing in on itself and pushing the frantic beings closer and closer together. After nearly an hour the Allurians were forced together and the sphere stopped collapsing and began to pulse with power so bright and fast that it even distracted those still fighting on the expansive plains below. Almost all fighting had ceased as Tribarians, Elementals, Elves and demons alike all stood together and watched with awe at the scene that was unfolding. Everyone was forced to divert their eyes when the dome’s light reached its climax and became too intense and the resulting magical backlash sent most crashing to

the ground. After several minutes to shake off the shock and reorient themselves everyone turned their attention back to the cliffside to find it empty. The Allurians and the Phoenix Lords were both gone.

Spurred on by the obvious retreat or defeat of the Allurians the Elves led their combined armies to victory after two more days of very violent and bloody fighting. After all of the wounded were being cared for Dedelus, an Elven prince and the commander of their army climbed to the top of the cliff to see if he could determine what had happened to his missing comrades. What he found was not what he was expecting.

The Phoenix Lords had not vanished as they had believed but were all laying scattered about the ground. Immediately sending for help he began to check for survivors. Over half were now dead and the rest were in a magically induced coma from the strain of what they had done. Over the next few months many of those regained consciousness but there were some that continued to decline rapidly and eventually their bodies gave out. Finally Ulfgar was the last to awaken and rest perished. Out of over eleven thousand Phoenix Lords a mere four thousand remained. The conflict had lasted for well over a thousand years and literally half of all life in the universe had been lost, but those who survived recognized that it was a time for celebration, not mourning.

As time went by the many races went their own ways but remained in contact with one another. As all life did, they changed and evolved in different ways such as the Elves finding their connection and tranquility with nature. But known changed more than the Phoenix Lords. Over time they had increased their numbers to what they once were and built a powerful empire based on peace with all living things. Unlike most magical beings their magic continues to grow throughout their entire life instead of reaching its peak and then remaining constant. Without the Allurians to prevent them from growing, both in number and power, they found that as they reached a certain point in their life their bodies are unable to support the massive amounts of magical power that is constantly being increased. So they have two choices, they can either expel the excess magic, basically let it leak out of them. Or if, and this is a very big if, they have the knowledge, mental discipline and peace of mind that is demanded of them then they can actually give up physical form and exist solely energy much like a ghost. But unlike ghost they are extremely powerful. These 'evolved' Phoenix Lords are known as the Ashen. Most will never be able to reach the point where they can actually accomplish this because they simply can't achieve the mental and spiritual advances required for one reason or another. But it is what all Phoenix Lords endeavor to achieve. The Ashen no longer took an active part in the running of the empire and but were there to guide those who sought their advise.

Unfortunately as always happens, peace was not to last. A Phoenix Lord by the name of Zamiel began arguing the idea that since it was the Phoenix Lords that led the 'revolution' against the Allurians and it was they that kept them imprisoned then they should have dominion over the other races. At first no one took him seriously until he started to gather a rather strong following among some of the younger men and women that were not around to see the violence and the atrocities that came with the war with the

Allurians. He convinced them that since they were the most powerful race they should be given a free hand above all others.

Zamiel was arrested for inciting a riot when he took the opportunity to use the trial for his own ends. During his testimony he spun a web of lies that placed the blame on others and portrayed himself as some kind of martyr. Though this did not sway the court, it had an impact on the general population which was evident when Zamiel was banished from their homeland and many left to join him. Nothing more was heard of him in centuries until he began launching attacks on the distant outposts of the empire. Imani, commander of their army was quick to move in to put down this insurrection. Sadly he was killed in an ambush that took the lives of most of his men and the rest were captured. Many of the prisoners eventually joined Zamiel's ranks.

Gabriel, one of the most powerful Phoenix Lords at the time and long time friend of Zamiel's, was outraged at his former friend's betrayal and treason and immediately demanded command. With Gabriel's fearsome reputation in battle the council that ruled over the empire was quick to agree to his terms of absolute power and command over the army. He was quick to fill his ranks with veterans who had fought alongside him against the Allurians and even requested the Elven monarchy to permit him to recruit some of their most experienced commanders to train and command some of his younger and inexperienced soldiers.

While an elf would be no match for a fully trained Phoenix Lord in one on one combat their experience, knowledge and will to win would be an inspiration to even the most experienced Phoenix warrior. Soon Gabriel began attack Zamiel's forces relentlessly and they have been at war ever since. Several thousand years they have been fighting have found themselves in a stalemate.

"So, any questions?" Neville finished as he looked around at all of the dumbfounded faces around the room. Everyone continued to stare at him with blank faces as they tried to process what they had just heard.

"What exactly happened to the Allurians? You said they were imprisoned, but how?" Lily asked curiously.

"As I said, the Phoenix Lords used their power and focused their positive emotions into it to make it stronger and lock them inside a shell that was taken outside of normal space. It works similarly to the Patronus charm on Dementors. But unlike the patronus charm it does not fade away. As long as the Phoenix Lord who cast it is still alive then the charm will hold. When a child reaches the age of ten years old their magic is also added to this shell. So as long as there is a Phoenix Lord is living somewhere in the universe then the Allurians will be locked away for ever." Finally Hermione spoke up, asking a question she had asked before at the beginning of the 'meeting'.

"Um, if all of this is true than how can Harry be a Phoenix Lord when he is human?" She asked slowly.

“What do any of you know about moving between different realms?” Neville asked, seemingly ignoring Hermione’s question. When it was clear that none of them knew much of anything he explained. “Moving between different realms is very difficult in some cases. The Elves for example can move between this realm and their own fairly easily as well as the realm in which the Phoenix Lords live. But they cannot go from that realm to this one directly. The Phoenix Lords can go to the realm of the Elves easily enough but unlike the Elves they can’t enter this realm directly in any way. It’s very difficult to explain so don’t ask me to. Now the only way a Phoenix Lord can enter this realm is to be born into it.”

“What do you mean ‘born into it’? Wouldn’t they be human then?” Luna asked in confusion.

“Coming here takes a very long and involved process of aligning one’s magic in a certain way that lets them project their spirit into this realm to be born. By all appearances they are normal humans in everyway. Some live an entire lifetime not knowing what they really are. They are usually much more powerful than your average wizard and have more skills. Until they die. Like a phoenix, a Phoenix Lord is reborn from death. So when they die here in whatever fashion they begin to regain their memories and the majority of their power. They call this the ‘awakening’.”

“So that’s why Lord Maul called Harry Gabriel, because that is who he really is?” Lily asked in shock and sadness at the idea that her son was not that at all.

“In a manner of speaking. Yes, technically he is Gabriel but he is still Harry Potter. The memories he has of events that happened before he was born are not first hand. It’s more like he is carrying around someone else’s memories.” Neville answered quickly to try to put to rest any doubts or worries about who Harry really is. “When a Phoenix Lord is finished her on earth and their spirit goes back to its original body everything that happened here will be just as real to him as any other memory. While they have friends and family of their own, they will love and miss the ones they had here just as much.”

“How do you know all of this? Why did Harry tell you and not us?” Luna asked with an expressionless face.

“I know because I am also a Phoenix Lord.” This was not what they were expecting to hear. That was clearly evident when nearly half of those present fell out of their chairs and everyone else was looking at Neville in shock.

“But, but, you don’t have wings or anything. You don’t catch on fire either.” Ron stated loudly as he picked himself up off the floor.

“No I don’t. Only the most powerful of us can manifest characteristics of our true form when on earth. That includes the wings and the burnings. My, ‘true name’ I guess you can call it is Uziel, Gabriel’s top lieutenant. But as I said, the memories and knowledge acquired before birth seems like someone else’s so please do not use that name for

anything, it would feel weird. The reason we decided to trust you with this information is because Harry discovered that Lord Maul is really Zamiel and Commander Kull is really Ulfgar, another of the renegade Phoenix warriors.”

“Ok that was about the strangest story I have ever heard.” Draco muttered to himself. “And how would something like that cause so much trouble if people found out?” By everyone’s reaction to the young Slytherin’s question it was clear that most wondered the same thing. Grumbling to himself Neville vowed to kill Harry for making him do this by himself.

“Most because of religion. Every religion that exists today and most of those of the ancient world has some customs or beliefs that came from the events I have just told you. A few examples are the defeat and banishment to the Titans in Greek mythology by Zeus and the other gods. This came from the defeat of the Allurians. Then you also have the belief in a war between angels. A renegade angel being banished and waging war against those he once called brothers. Zamiel is actually one of the names given to the Satan. And there are countless examples such as these. If people knew of these events there would be an uproar from the religious community. Telling people that these things truly did happen and had nothing to do with god would piss a lot of people off and I don’t want to deal with it, we have enough on our hands already. Do you understand now?” He finished with a sigh.

“So, is Sirius a Phoenix Lord as well?” Remus asked curiously as everyone looked at him as if he were stupid for asking such a ridiculous question. “What, he said that they recover memories and power after being killed, so they killed him. How else could he still be alive now?” He demanded defensively.

“Yes he is.” Neville said through clenched teeth which confused everyone.

“You don’t like him?”

“Oh I like Sirius just fine. It’s the changes his awakening is going to cause I don’t like.”

“What changes?” Tonks asked slowly as her question was broken up in shock. No one could utter a word as their jaws dropped open in shock at what they were seeing. In the chair that Neville had currently occupied now sat a small rainbow colored baby pig that was squealing in fury. On the other side of the room Sirius was sitting up in Harry’s bed with a look of absolute glee on his face as he saw what he had done.

While passing through the fog he had hidden his parents in Harry had a lot of time to think about his life. His whole existence has been based around protection. Protection of those that he cared about, protection of those who could not protect themselves and the protection of the integrity of those he puts his faith in and pledges his allegiance to. For a short time, in the life of a Phoenix Lord that is, he and everyone else believed they had finally found piece. But then a friend’s betrayal changed that. Armies of Phoenix warriors clashing for dominance in a conflict that should never have happened. The product of

young minds being led astray by those that had once been revered as heroes by their people. No they are seen as traitors and monsters.

“Where are we?” The sudden intrusion into his thoughts almost had Harry jump out of his skin before he remembered he had a child in his arms. Looking down to his shoulder he saw Amy looking around in confusion, and with a little fear.

“We are going to see an old friend of mine. All of this fog is known as the great barrier. It’s used to keep people from finding him and the others he lives with. It’s not just used to hide their home but they also cast a spell on it so that the people who reach this area would become confused and walk around in circles. They would eventually find their way out and then forget all about it. It’s the perfect shield. It works, it doesn’t hurt anybody and know one knows it’s even here.” Harry explained with a smile though he was a little worried at her reaction to being surrounded by magic. Though she had accepted him he was not sure if she would be so receptive to others. Amy was quiet for a moment while she thought about and came to the conclusion that although it was magic it didn’t hurt anyone so it was ok.

“Well what’s on the other side?” She asked with no small amount of worry. Harry of course was quick to reassure her.

“A glorious city.” Harry started with large grin a wave of his left arm. “Filled with wonderful people. There are also fairies and unicorns even some leprechauns and elves. Do you know what a Centaur is?” He said while looking at her with excitement. She merely shook her head while her eyes went wide. Harry was pleased to see that although her first encounters with magic were horrible she was also eager to see the beautiful side of the magical world. She was excited to see things that every little girls dreams about.

“A Centaur is a creature that has the body of a horse and the upper body of a human.”

“Wow.”

“They are really fantastic creatures but are insufferable to talk to most of the time.” He said with a grimace.

“Why, are they mean?” She asked with worry in her voice.

“No they aren’t mean. Centaurs are stargazers, they read the future in the sky. If you try to talk to them it’s hard to get a straight answer. They will usually start talking in riddles. For the most part I don’t have the patience for such things.” Harry trailed off as the fog began to clear and a smile spread across his face. “Well Amy, welcome to Avalon.” He said happily as he pointed out the country side before them.